

# THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION OF LOCAL BELIEFS IN INDONESIA: 100 YEARS OF PRAN SOEH'S MINDFULNESS STRATEGY

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**Abstract** *Technology is not merely an instrumental device but an embodied configuration of materiality, movement, and meaning sedimented within objects. Focusing on the tempayan in the Hulu Sembakung community along the Indonesia-Malaysia border, this study examines how a ritual artifact functions within a cross-border riverine lifeworld that unsettles fixed territorial governance. Methodologically, the research employs digital ethnography and digital spatial observation, tracing ongoing interactions among community members through Facebook, where prior ethnographic relations have been sustained and extended. The findings demonstrate that river morphology enables continuous mobility that exceeds state territorial boundaries, while the tempayan embodies hybrid cultural materiality shaped by historical encounters between Chinese ceramics and local ritual systems. Through processes of cultural recontextualization, the object becomes detached from its original production logic and reconstituted as a vessel of kinship, obligation, and intergenerational continuity. Its circulation across waterways and state borders generates friction with state materiality, particularly attempts to stabilize sovereignty through fixed territorial administration. These findings demonstrate that embodied technologies such as the tempayan actively mediate relations between mobility, community, and state power, revealing how borderland materiality destabilizes territorial sovereignty and generates alternative moral geographies.*

## Keyword:

*Pran Soeh, Javanese local beliefs, non-confrontational cultural resistance, state legitimacy*

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past century, Indonesia has undergone significant political transformations, from the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods and the independence revolution to the transition of power between regimes such as the Old Order, New Order, and Reformasi, to the present day. These changes have not only affected the structure of the state and national identity but also impacted policies regarding religion and belief. Pran Soeh, a new belief born in Muntilan, Central Java, Indonesia, represents the dynamic interaction between local beliefs and Indonesia's socio-political changes. The

structure of the Pran Soeh belief reflects cultural resistance and adaptation to the dominance of regimes that often set normative limits on expressions of diversity, especially during the Old Order (Diprose et al., 2019).

During the Old Order era, three members of the Pran Soeh community were implicated in the September 30 Movement (G 30 S) of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). This event triggered increasingly intense repressive actions by the state against religious minorities. As a result, several Pran Soeh followers who had no political involvement also became targets. They were arrested and detained without a transparent legal process (Zurbuchen, 2002). However, several years later, the court proved that these prisoners were not involved in the G 30 S PKI movement. As part of rehabilitation, the government issued official certificates stating that they were free of any affiliation with communist ideology.

Furthermore, this incident became a historical burden that continues to haunt the Pran Soeh community. The stigmatization as a group associated with communism has formed a negative perception among the general public that is difficult to erase, even though legal evidence has cleared them. The impact of this stigma is evident; one example is the rejection and eventual demolition of a Pran Soeh house of worship in the Ungaran, Semarang area (Fidiyani, 2016). In addition, administratively, this community also faces various obstacles in obtaining official recognition from the state as a religious entity. To date, the struggle to obtain formal legitimacy continues, indicating that structural and cultural challenges to the existence of minority beliefs, such as Pran Soeh, have not been resolved within the state system (Ramadhan & Faozi, 2023).

Despite often experiencing unfair treatment, the leaders and followers of Pran Soeh consistently respond peacefully and constructively. There has never been any record of retaliatory actions through mass mobilization or open expressions of resistance as a form of dissatisfaction with the injustices they have experienced. Rationality remains the primary foundation of organizational policy-making, with strategic decisions always grounded in spiritual considerations and deep reflection on the social situation. Their religious attitude is directed towards a peaceful approach, viewing experiences of injustice as part of a spiritual test. Through spiritual practices, inner reflection, and surrender to the Creator, the Pran Soeh community chooses a contemplative path as a form of non-confrontational resistance to structural pressure (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016).

Although not as famous as world figures, Pran Soeh Sastrosuwignyo is a pioneer in advocating a political stance that prioritizes a balance among spirituality, religion, and reflection on existing social and political conditions. By incorporating ethical and moral considerations into political decision-making, world peace and harmony will be maintained. Political decisions based on reflection and *mindfulness*, like this, cannot be dismissed as products of political attitudes shaped by a hundred years of experience. From the colonial era to the modern era, various leadership styles have been passed through. As a new belief, Pran Soeh is often considered a threat to the dominant belief, so state policies often place new beliefs in a vulnerable position in social and state life.

Academic studies on Pran-Soeh and local religions in Indonesia have employed various approaches. Shadiqin (2011) situates Pran-Soeh within *a new religious movement* born of Java's socio-cultural context and the state's power relations. This research shows that Pran-Soeh cannot be understood solely as an individual spiritual expression, but rather as a religious movement that builds collective identity through symbols, rituals, and cultural narratives. In the face of social and political pressure, Pran-Soeh developed adaptive and moderate sustainability strategies. This study emphasizes that local religions are always in a process of negotiation with the dominant power structures. However, Shadiqin's analysis still focuses on the dimensions of religious movements and identities, and has not explored in depth the ethical reflections and inner awareness that underlie the survival strategies of the Pran-Soeh community.

Nasruddin (2013) analyzes the dimensions of the power relations between the state and Pran-Soeh more explicitly. In his study, Pran-Soeh is positioned as a religious community that experiences state hegemony through religious recognition policies and administrative regulations. The state not only functions as a regulator but also as a producer of discourse that determines the boundaries between legitimate and deviant religions. Nasruddin shows that Pran-Soeh's resistance to state hegemony is not

expressed through open confrontation but through symbolic resistance, administrative adjustments, and the strengthening of internal solidarity. These findings show that local religions have political agency, even if it is expressed in unconventional forms. As explained by Khodori (2024) in his study of *non-community adherents*, local beliefs can continue to be threatened not only by state hegemony but also by a lack of internal social legitimacy, thereby making the struggle for identity part of a broader dynamic of social recognition. However, resistance in this study is still understood primarily as a response to structural pressures. At the same time, the dimensions of spiritual awareness and internal community ethics have not been the primary focus of analysis.

A different perspective is offered by Fidiyani (2016) through a legal and human rights approach. This research emphasizes the state's responsibility to guarantee freedom of religion and protect religious minorities from discrimination and conflict. Fidiyani shows that various religious conflicts involving local religions, including Pran-Soeh, reflect the state's failure to fulfill its constitutional obligations. Conflict resolution is often administrative and reactive, failing to address the root causes of structural discrimination and social exclusion. The findings of Iqbal et al. (2025) show that traditional traditions, as embodied in the Serat Prabangkara, can be understood as cultural capital that is continuously reconstructed to maintain its symbolic and social value. This study makes an important contribution to understanding the legal position of local religions in Indonesia. However, the primary focus of the research remains on the role of the state and legal instruments, so that the internal dynamics of the community and the non-confrontational ethical strategies they have developed have not been adequately explored.

Based on this state-of-the-art mapping, studies on Pran-Soeh and local religions in Indonesia are still dominated by structural, power-relations, and state-law approaches. Previous studies have successfully revealed the marginal position of local religions, the forms of state hegemony, and the weak legal protection of minority communities. However, there is a gap in understanding how the Pran-Soeh community internally develops survival strategies rooted in spiritual awareness, ethical reflection, and collective self-control. Resistance is more often understood as an external reaction to state pressure, rather than as a practice of consciousness formed through long historical experience. In addition, the relationship between experiences of political repression and the formation of a non-confrontational attitude as a conscious and sustainable political strategy has not yet been systematically explained.

This study offers a new perspective by viewing Pran-Soeh's struggle not merely as a local religious phenomenon or a form of resistance against the state, but as a collectively internalized mindfulness-based political practice. This study shows that the non-confrontational strategy employed by Pran-Soeh is not passive resignation, but rather the result of reflective consciousness built over more than a century of historical experience. By grounding socio-political action in full awareness, nonjudgmental attitudes, empathy, and self-reflection, this study broadens understanding of religious resistance beyond the paradigm of open conflict. Another novelty lies in interpreting local Javanese spirituality as a source of practical political ethics in the face of structural repression. Thus, this study contributes to enriching religious and political studies in Indonesia by presenting mindfulness as an analytical framework for understanding local religions' strategies for peaceful, sustainable survival.

## 2. Method

This study uses a **qualitative, ethnographic approach**. This research aims to understand the struggle for recognition of a local belief within a long and varied regime and social, political, and power dynamics. Ethnography also examines how political power shapes attitudes and policies of struggle, belief identities, and even belief structures that continue to be adapted to social situations (Geertz, 1973).

Appropriate data collection methods include **participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and reviews of historical and administrative documents** (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observations were conducted to understand the community's spiritual practices, behaviors, and non-confrontational expressions in their daily lives and when facing social pressure. In-depth interviews were conducted with community leaders, family members

affected by the historical stigma of the G30S PKI, and government officials involved in administrative or legal advocacy. Documents such as state rehabilitation archives, letters of rejection for the construction of houses of worship, and legal documents are important data for reconstructing the narrative of structural injustice and the peaceful response of this community.

The data analysis used in this study is Spradley's (1979) model. Spradley's approach enables a deep ethnographic understanding of how the Pran Soeh community builds identity and survival strategies through the language, symbols, and meanings it produces in a complex historical context. The four stages of Spradley's data analysis are: first, domain analysis identifies the categories of meaning used by the Pran Soeh community to describe their reality, such as the terms *ritual*, *spiritual practice*, and *surrender*, which reflect spiritual strategies in responding to structural pressures. Second, taxonomic analysis organizes these terms into a hierarchical structure to understand the relationships between concepts, such as how *surrender to a higher power fits* within a broader non-confrontational strategy. Third, component analysis is used to explore the implied meanings in social and symbolic actions, such as peaceful and rational responses to state political repression. Finally, cultural theme analysis reveals deep patterns of meaning that unite all these practices, namely, spiritually based cultural resistance and mindfulness strategies as responses to historical injustice. Data credibility was tested by increasing data accuracy and extending the research duration (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Dynamics of Pran Soeh's Attitude**

##### **3.1.1 Pran Soeh's Attitude during the Dutch Colonial Era 1921-1945**

Gunung Rama Pran Soeh, the bearer of the teachings, was known from an early age for his interest in the mystical world. He reportedly received a "revelation" after meditating on Mount Tidar. He was also known as the son of a religious figure, Kyai Wiropati. After this revelatory experience, he was believed to have undergone a profound spiritual transformation and came to be regarded as a holy man. In this sense, he was seen as having attained unity with God and was later given the title *Resi Pran Soeh (RPS) Sastrosoewignya* (Batubara et al., 2025).

Pran Soeh emerged in the early twentieth century, when Indonesia was still under Dutch colonial rule. At that time, the social, political, and economic situation was unfavorable, and access to formal education was highly limited, especially for rural communities. Colonial schooling was expensive and largely inaccessible to ordinary villagers, resulting in limited literacy and only minimal exposure to formal modes of reasoning and institutional knowledge. In this context, mystical and magical practices became deeply embedded in everyday life, not only because they were relatively inexpensive, but also because they offered accessible forms of healing, protection, and existential reassurance. This setting is important for understanding how Pran Soeh initially gained followers. Before developing into a more organized belief community, his influence appears to have grown through his reputation for mystical-spiritual abilities and dukun-like spiritual services, which resonated strongly with the cultural expectations and practical needs of rural Javanese society. Thus, his early authority was established not through formal institutions, but through a form of spiritual charisma that was socially accessible, culturally familiar, and meaningful to his early followers (Nasution et al., 2024).

However, Pran Soeh did not stop at mystical authority alone. He further emphasized spiritual independence as a form of resistance to colonial domination. Rooted in Javanese values and cultural syncretism, this movement offered a spiritual alternative outside the framework of official religions, which were often perceived as entangled with colonial power. Although Pran Soeh was not directly involved in practical politics, his teachings inspired his followers to support independence through a spiritual approach centered on awareness, self-mastery, and inner autonomy. In this way, the early mystical basis of his authority later became the social foundation for the consolidation of Pran Soeh as a local belief community.

##### **3.1.2 Pran Soeh's Stance During the Old Order Era, 1945-1970**

The Old Order was a period of development and identity search. The administrators of Pran Soeh wanted these teachings to be put into practice in society. Pran Soeh carried out various maneuvers both internally and externally. They questioned the refinement of belief structures and teachings to the point of discourse on social issues and polemics in the name of their new religion.

Pran Soeh began to organize its activities in a more structured manner. Darmowasito, as the leader, wanted Pran Soeh to be the formal name of the religious organization. However, establishing the Pran Soeh religion was not easy. Various debates arose regarding the most relevant name for this new religion. Pran Soeh was initially named Omat Mohammad Manunggal (OMM), but Muslims disapproved of this because the word *manunggal* came after the word *Mohammad*. The name was eventually changed to Omat Mohammad Muntilan (OMM). However, this name still received criticism from Catholics because they felt that Muntilan did not only belong to Muslims but also to people of other religions. Finally, on October 14, 1957, the name was officially changed to Adam Makrifat (Mujahidah & Jamaluddin, 2023).

On November 4, 1961, the name Adam Makrifat was changed again to Pran-Soeh. However, the followers did not fully agree with this change. Eventually, they sought to formulate more structured teachings and formally organize their followers by establishing *the Indonesian Adam Makrifat Community (PUAMI)*. This step aimed to provide institutional legitimacy for their existence, while also demonstrating an effort to comply with state regulations. In addition, some followers wanted the name PUAMI to be retained. This was due to their concern that if the name Pran Soeh were used for the religion, the descendants of Pran Soeh would take over and seize power within the religion (Barker, 2014).

On the other hand, this adaptation was carried out while preserving their spiritual identity. Pran Soeh sought to formulate teachings relevant to the modern context while preserving the mystical traditions at the core of their beliefs. This strategy became an effort to navigate external pressures while ensuring the spiritual sustainability of the Pran Soeh community.

Theological structure has also undergone various refinements in Pran Soeh. The choice of names from Oemat Mohammad Manunggal, Oemat Mohammad Moentilan, Adam Makrifat, to Pran Soeh has had an impact on the structure of its mystical beliefs. Various refinements have been made to rituals and teachings, such as days of worship, worship procedures, and even the language of worship (Bell, 1997).

In addition to theological aspects, Pran Soeh leaders also made improvements in social aspects, such as procedures for dealing with death, marriage, and birth. The formulation of procedures for death, marriage, and birth rituals continued to be discussed by Pran Soeh leaders, who documented them and made them characteristic of the Pran Soeh community.

During the phase of internal strengthening, 1965 was a turbulent period in Indonesian history. The climax was the September 30 Movement initiated by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as an attempt to overthrow the state. The impact of this political event spread across various levels of society, including local religious communities such as Pran Soeh, some of whose leaders were accused of involvement in the movement (Cribb, 2001). These accusations not only caused political pressure but also led to the detention of several followers without due process of law.

The events of 1965 left a deep trauma on the Pran Soeh community. Pran Soeh was accused of involvement in the PKI movement despite the lack of valid evidence. This created a social stigma that long-term burdened the community. Many members of the Pran Soeh community experienced intimidation, discrimination, and loss of social legitimacy (Hearman, 2017). This situation worsened the position of Pran Soeh as a religious minority group that was already in a vulnerable position. As a result, this bitter experience became one of the heaviest historical burdens that shaped the collective narrative of the Pran Soeh community.

Although many Pran Soeh leaders and followers were released after being found not guilty, the negative stigma persists. Efforts to restore the good name of the Pran Soeh community in society still face an uphill battle, especially in the political arena. The general

public tends to internalize the misperception that Pran Soeh is associated with communism, thereby preventing the full realization of historical reconciliation. Thus, this case confirms that the social burden resulting from national political events not only affects the leading actors but also local religious groups who have become victims of stigmatization.

### **3.1.3 Pran Soeh's stance during the New Order era, 1971-1998**

In Indonesia, the period 1971–1998 was marked by the consolidation of the New Order regime under President Soeharto. The regime strongly emphasized political and social stability as the foundation of national development and exercised strict control over public religious and cultural expression. One of its most consequential policies was the recognition of only five official religions—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism—and the requirement that every citizen affiliate with one of them in the religion column of the Identity Card (Sukirno & Natalis, 2025). For local belief communities such as Pran Soeh, this policy created a profound dilemma: they had to choose between formally identifying with an official religion or remaining vulnerable to administrative exclusion and social marginalization. As a result, Pran Soeh not only faced the risk of formal non-recognition but also increasing difficulties in maintaining its rituals, organizational continuity, and distinct spiritual identity.

The attitude of Pran Soeh during this period was shaped by a combination of resistance to state hegemony and strategic adaptation aimed at ensuring communal survival. As a form of resistance, the community consistently criticized discriminatory state policies that ignored Indonesia's spiritual plurality. Yet this criticism was not expressed through open confrontation. Rather, it was articulated through internal reflection, symbolic persistence, and communication with other local belief groups facing similar pressures. At the same time, Pran Soeh adopted adaptive measures by strengthening its organizational structure, reformulating aspects of its teachings, and renewing certain ritual expressions in order to navigate state regulations without abandoning its spiritual core. Retaining the name "Pran Soeh" as a symbol of struggle, despite internal debate and the legacy of the earlier name Adam Makrifat, illustrates how adaptation was closely tied to the preservation of collective identity.

To confront external pressure, Pran Soeh also developed a dialogical strategy. The community participated in formal and informal forums involving religious communities, government representatives, official religious organizations, and civil society groups. Through these interactions, Pran Soeh sought to build solidarity with other minority groups and to argue that local beliefs should not be treated as threats to nationalism or political stability. Issues such as ritual restrictions, social stigma, and administrative discrimination were raised as part of this dialogue. In this sense, dialogue was not merely a defensive response but a proactive effort to secure space for recognition while preserving the core principles of the community's teachings. This strategy helped Pran Soeh maintain its existence during a period in which open resistance would likely have intensified repression.

Despite these efforts, Pran Soeh could not fully escape the pressure of the New Order state. Discrimination took both direct and indirect forms. Followers often faced the prohibition of ritual activities, restrictions on organizational movement, difficulties in obtaining gathering permits, and obstacles in registering their organization. In some cases, intimidation by state officials was also reported, including raids, the dissolution of meetings, and close surveillance of communal activities. This repressive environment not only constrained freedom of religion but also reinforced the social stigma that Pran Soeh followers were "deviant" or politically suspect. Such conditions placed the community in a constant dilemma: they had to preserve their spiritual identity while living under the threat of continued discrimination and state monitoring (Ummah, 2023).

Amid this pressure, the Pran Soeh community increasingly concentrated on strengthening its internal spiritual identity as the basis of collective survival. However, this strengthening was not limited to doctrinal affirmation. It required followers to internalize a set of ethical and spiritual values that could guide their response to external hostility in practical ways. Among the most important values were love, loyalty to God, self-control, purity of soul, control of desires, and devotion to society. Love was understood as the refusal to answer stigma with hatred, enabling followers to face rejection without

reproducing hostility. Loyalty to God gave them an inner source of legitimacy, so that their spiritual identity did not depend entirely on recognition from the state. Self-control and control of desires were especially crucial, because followers were expected to restrain anger, fear, resentment, and the impulse toward retaliation when confronted with ritual bans, administrative injustice, or intimidation. Purity of soul referred to the effort to protect the inner self from revenge, prejudice, and destructive emotions, while devotion to society reminded members that marginalization should not lead to withdrawal from social responsibility, but rather to continued ethical conduct within the wider community (Irawan & Afdal, 2023).

These values were cultivated through study forums, group meditation, and internal discussions. Such activities functioned not only as mechanisms for transmitting teachings but also as spaces of emotional discipline, mutual reinforcement, and collective resilience. In these forums, followers learned to reinterpret suffering as a spiritual test rather than as a justification for confrontation. They were trained to remain calm under pressure, to avoid reactive hostility, to support one another, and to preserve dignity in the face of exclusion. Thus, the internalization of Pran Soeh's teachings was not merely a matter of personal piety, but a practical strategy of peaceful resilience. Through these ethical disciplines, the community was able to maintain internal solidarity while reducing the risk of escalation in its relationship with the state and the surrounding society.

In addition, Pran Soeh sought to keep its teachings relevant in an increasingly plural and changing society by accommodating certain modern elements without abandoning the essence of its spirituality. This effort shows that the community's survival strategy during the New Order was neither passive nor purely accommodative. Rather, it was a reflective and disciplined form of non-confrontational resistance: Pran Soeh preserved its identity, deepened its internal ethics, engaged in dialogue, and endured discrimination without abandoning its commitment to peace, spiritual dignity, and social responsibility. In this way, the New Order period became a crucial phase in which Pran Soeh transformed spiritual teachings into a practical moral framework for surviving repression.

#### **3.1.4 Pran Soeh's stance in the Reform Era 1998-2021**

The reform era replaced the New Order era. Pran Soeh's struggle did not stop. Under the Solidarity for the Struggle of the Pran Soeh Community, the struggle continues to clarify the communist stereotype of the Pran Soeh community. In this context, Pran Soeh can be seen as a symbol of the effort to actualize the rights of individuals and groups outside the mainstream in the Indonesian political sphere (Rohidin, 2020). During the Reformation period, which saw a transition from authoritarianism to democracy, Pran Soeh recognized the importance of obtaining official recognition from the government to achieve more substantial and sustainable change. One of the approaches Pran Soeh took was direct communication with the government, as reflected in a document known as the "Letter to the President."

In this letter, addressed directly to the President of Indonesia, Pran Soeh expressed his concerns and aspirations regarding the social injustices that persist across various sectors, including the economic, political, and cultural. This letter was not merely a tool to voice dissatisfaction, but also offered solutions to the problems faced by Indonesian society after the New Order. This approach shows that Pran Soeh's struggle did not stop at symbolic resistance, but developed into institutional innovation oriented towards sustainability and organizational strengthening. Innovative planning in da'wah institutions shows that sustainable strategies are not only about resistance but also about organizational innovation (Aswari & Castrawijaya, 2024). This indicates that Pran Soeh adopted a more constructive approach by proposing alternative policies the government could adopt to address injustice and marginalization (Andiani et al., 2023).

At the beginning of BJ Habibi's presidency, the leader of Solidaritas Perjuangan Umat Pran Soeh sent a letter through the State Palace and to his residence in Patra Kuningan, but there was no response. Later, during Gus Dur's leadership, there was a slight response to the letter from Solidaritas Perjuangan Umat Pran Soeh. The leader of Solidaritas Perjuangan Umat Pran Soeh was summoned to the President's residence in March 2001. However, there was still no change in policy towards the Pran Soeh religion.

Later, during the leadership of Megawati and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the leaders of Solidaritas Perjuangan Umat Pran Soeh also sent letters requesting rehabilitation and clarification, but

neither received a response. It was only in 2016, during the presidency of Joko Widodo, that the Attorney General's Office responded to the request letter on behalf of the PAKEM RI Team. The leader was summoned to provide information regarding a letter of clarification stating that the teachings of Pran-Soeh had no connection with the G30S PKI. The meeting was held at the Sleman District Attorney's Office in November 2017.

In 2007, the Pran Soeh Community already had a legal entity, as evidenced by a Notary Deed, and was registered with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (Triono et al., 2022). Based on this legal authority, the Pran-Soeh community began receiving invitations to attend events from various agencies and religious organizations in the Magelang area, such as the Mendut Temple ruwatan ceremony, the Magelang FKUB event at the Mertoyudan Seminary, the Borobudur Temple ruwatan ceremony, and so on.

Since 2017, the Pran Soeh Community has been a member of the Indonesian Supreme Council of Belief in God Almighty (MLKI). It has begun to participate in activities at both the regency and provincial levels (Viri & Febriany, 2020). The joining of the Pran Soeh community to the FKUB and MLKI is a form of acceptance of the Pran Soeh faith amidst the diversity of beliefs in Indonesian society.

Finally, the long struggle for recognition of the local Pran Soeh faith from the New Order era to the Reformation began to bear fruit. Through constitutional channels, direct dialogue with the government, and the strengthening of its legal legitimacy through legal entity status in 2007, Pran Soeh succeeded in changing its position from a marginalized community to a recognized actor in Indonesia's religious landscape. Its official involvement since 2017 in the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) and the Supreme Council of Belief in God Almighty Indonesia (MLKI) confirms its success in eroding the stigma and stereotypes that had been attached to it for decades. This achievement is not only a symbol of social acceptance but also a beautiful precedent for other local faith communities in Indonesia that recognition of local beliefs can be achieved through steadfast principles, inclusive communication, and the use of legal instruments.

## **3.2 Analysis of Pran Soeh's Mindful Political Attitude**

### **3.2.1 Full Awareness Elements**

The element of full awareness in the teachings and practices of Pran Soeh represents a fundamental dimension that connects individual spiritual experiences with collective social constructs. Full awareness is not only understood as attention to the present moment rooted in the practice of meditation and transcendental contemplation, but also as a reflective mechanism that enables the management of traumatic experiences, resistance to external pressures, and the transformation of spiritual values into social capital. Thus, the practice of mindfulness in Pran Soeh does not stop at the mystical-personal realm, but moves into a cultural and political strategy that supports community resilience, maintains the continuity of tradition, and strengthens the legitimacy of the existence of belief groups amid the dynamics of political and social change in Indonesia (Sentot et al., 2025).

The early period of Pran Soeh's whole consciousness dimension was his understanding of how to interpret his spiritual experience as a form of full consciousness (mindfulness) born from meditation practice on Mount Tidar, where he believed he received *revelations* and felt unity with God. This existential transformation not only affirmed him as a holy man but also strengthened his orientation towards spiritual independence, which was positioned as a form of resistance against colonialism. By emphasizing autonomous spirituality, his teachings inspired his followers to internalize mindfulness, which was then manifested in their support for the independence movement. Thus, the spirituality practiced by Pran Soeh not only reflects a mystical-individual dimension but also functions as a collective strategy that fosters independence and strengthens the decolonial struggle through transcendental consciousness (Parker, 2024).

The element of full consciousness during the Old Order period, when Pran Soeh adapted religious practices in the Pran Soeh community, not only emphasized individual spiritual experiences but also the protection of mystical traditions as a collective identity. This process was reflected in efforts to maintain

spiritual integrity while formulating rituals for death, marriage, and birth, which were continuously discussed reflectively within the community. This approach enabled the internalization of spiritual values and the documentation of ritual practices, ultimately shaping the characteristics of the Pran Soeh community. Thus, mindfulness not only plays a role in the contemplative dimension but also in the socio-cultural construction that maintains the continuity of spiritual identity and strengthens community resilience amid changing times (Sentot et al., 2025).

During the New Order phase, the practice of mindfulness in Pran Soeh's teachings was reflected in spiritual innovations aimed at remaining relevant to the increasingly pluralistic dynamics of society, without losing its transcendental essence. Within this framework, he consistently criticized the government's discriminatory policies that tended to ignore spiritual plurality in Indonesia, while also affirming the position of his teachings as a means of liberation and symbolic resistance. These efforts were reinforced by the transformation of teachings and the renewal of rituals that not only maintained spiritual continuity but also strengthened the religious organizational structure that had been built. Thus, Pran Soeh succeeded in maintaining his name and teachings as a symbol of struggle, where mindfulness serves as a reflective foundation that enables innovation, resistance, and continuity of spiritual identity in the face of external pressures and social change (Haidar et al., 2023).

In the reform era, Pran Soeh served as a symbol of full awareness, an effort to actualize the rights of individuals and groups outside the mainstream, while also fostering awareness of the importance of obtaining official recognition in the socio-religious sphere. This reflective awareness was realized through the institutionalization of the Pran Soeh Community, which obtained legal status, thereby strengthening its legitimacy in the public sphere. With this legal foundation, the community began to be invited to various strategic forums, such as the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) and the Indonesian Supreme Council of Faiths (MLKI), as well as to national cultural rituals, such as the ruwatan at Borobudur Temple. Mindfulness practices in this context not only internalize spiritual values but also facilitate the integration of the community into broader social structures, while strengthening recognition of religious identity plurality in Indonesia (Akbar, 2022).

Adim et al. (2024) reveals that one form of Pran Soeh's religious-political stance in gaining recognition was through active participation in reforming the New Order government's policies. This can be seen in his role in proposing the strengthening of Islam's position in state politics, which then led to the passing of the Marriage Law and increased involvement of Muslims in politics and government. However, Pran Soeh's struggle did not go smoothly, given the opposition from more secular or leftist parties, who considered that strengthening the role of religion in government could threaten the unity and integrity of the state.

Furthermore, recognition of the role of religion in Indonesian politics also presented ideological challenges that Pran Soeh had to face. As an intellectual and activist caught between the desire to fight for religious recognition and the ideological risks, he had to navigate the complex relationship among political power, religion, and state ideology. Pran Soeh's religious political stance not only reflects an effort to strengthen religion's influence in politics but also expresses dissatisfaction with the dominance of secular ideology, which considers religion to have no significant place in national life.

Overall, Pran Soeh's political stance in seeking recognition from the Indonesian government was not directly related to the G30S/PKI incident, but was strongly influenced by the political dynamics that emerged after it. The approach taken by Pran Soeh, which focused more on strengthening the role of religion in the country's political and social structures, reflected his desire to make religion an important pillar in the formation of a more moral national identity grounded in religious values. In this case, he not only fought for the recognition of Islam but also encouraged Indonesia to become a more just nation-state by considering broader moral dimensions in national life.

### **3.2.2 Empathetic Element**

Empathy, one of the four political attitudes proposed in this study, plays an important role in the Pran Soeh community's response to social and political pressures. Empathy is not only an understanding of other people's feelings, but also a thoughtful action that leads to the formation of more humane and

deeper relationships between individuals and groups (Seitova & Kovacs, 2024). In the context of Pran Soeh, this attitude of empathy is reflected in how this community responds to the social stigma and oppression they face. They not only feel their members' suffering but also strive to build stronger bonds with others, even with those who may not understand or even oppose their existence.

In the early days, until the Old Order, Pran Soeh's application of empathetic elements remained limited because the primary focus was on internal consolidation and reform of its belief structure. External pressure grew stronger due to accusations of involvement in communist rebellions, which resulted in social stigmatization and criminalization of its followers. In this situation, the empathy that emerged was more internal, manifesting in the defense of members detained without due process. Although they were eventually released due to lack of evidence, Pran Soeh chose to accept this reality with sincerity, so that empathy functioned more as a mechanism of moral resilience for the community than as an instrument of external dialogue. A significant transformation occurred during the New Order era, when empathy was positioned as a strategic foundation for building dialogue between the government, official religions, and local faith groups. This practice was not limited to understanding others' perspectives but also emphasized active involvement in bridging gaps in understanding, so that empathy functioned as social capital that strengthened solidarity among minority groups while reinforcing plurality in society.

During the Reformation era, empathy in Pran Soeh's leadership grew stronger through his participation in the Indonesian Religious Council (MLKI) and the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), which provided formal representation for religious communities. This involvement demonstrates sensitivity to the collective need to build equal and inclusive dialogue, while strengthening the social legitimacy of belief groups at the national level. The exact form of empathy is evident in *the letter to the President*, in which Pran Soeh expresses concern about the injustices experienced by minority communities, but with a constructive approach through offering solutions oriented towards social harmony. Thus, empathy is not only practiced as an emotional expression but is also transformed into an ethical and political instrument that bridges the aspirations of the community with the state structure and strengthens the framework of pluralism and religious diversity in Indonesia (Ulfah & Mukti, 2023).

According to Gergen et al. (2015), empathy is the basis for building healthy relationships in a diverse society, especially in the face of conflict and injustice. In this case, the empathy shown by the Pran Soeh community serves as a foundation for building solidarity within their group and with other communities facing similar challenges. One manifestation of this empathy is the Pran Soeh community's efforts to maintain the integrity of their teachings despite facing discrimination from external parties. They continue to accept differences, strive to understand others' perspectives, and try to live their lives in a way that not only respects their own beliefs but also shows respect for others' beliefs.

Activities involving empathy can take many forms, ranging from interreligious dialogues with other religious groups to concrete actions to help the oppressed or those in need, even when they themselves are in an unfavorable position. The courage of the Pran Soeh community to uphold these human values, despite political pressure, demonstrates the depth of their empathy for others' suffering. In this context, empathy serves not only as an internal response to their own suffering but also as a contribution to broader

Empathy theory. Empathy can be seen as a social skill that is very important in bridging differences between individuals or groups with different backgrounds or views. Pran Soeh applies empathy in their attitude towards the state and society at large, which leads to their characteristic non-confrontational attitude. For example, despite having experienced severe repression, this community did not respond with violence or hatred, but instead with compassion and understanding towards the opposing side. This is very important because it can reduce the potential for conflict escalation and pave the way for peace.

In addition, Klimecki (2019) research indicates that empathy is not only beneficial in an individual context but also has a significant impact on building an inclusive and tolerant community. The empathy shown by Pran Soeh can be seen as one of their ways of fighting injustice without violence, while also encouraging the creation of a more equitable space for marginalized religious communities. This shows how empathy not only reduces the potential for conflict but also serves as a bridge in realizing unity amid differences.

### **3.2.3 Nonjudgmental**

The nonjudgmental attitude developed by Pran Soeh can be understood as a strategy of full awareness in confronting the stressful socio-political dynamics of the Old Order, New Order, and Reformation eras. During the Old Order era, Pran Soeh faced slander of involvement in the communist rebellion movement simply because there were leaders involved, which led to public stigma and antipathy. This traumatic event continued during the New Order era, when state regulations requiring the administrative registration of one of the official religions threatened the existence of his community. Even during the Reformation era, his efforts to restore his dignity through an open letter to the President did not elicit a positive response, underscoring the persistence of the institutional marginalization he had experienced.

In the face of this series of painful events, Pran Soeh showed a nonjudgmental attitude by not categorizing his life experiences as good or bad. Acceptance of the reality faced was positioned as part of a natural selection that tested the community's sustainability, while also being interpreted as a transcendental will beyond human control. Thus, non-judgmentalism functions not only as a psychological defense mechanism but also as a spiritual and social strategy to maintain internal cohesion and existential sustainability amid political regime change. This attitude affirms the role of mindfulness in strengthening collective resilience, especially when communities face historical trauma and repeated discrimination (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

A nonjudgmental attitude is one of the important principles of mindfulness, applied in the daily practices of the Pran Soeh community. In many situations marked by injustice and repression, this community shows a remarkable attitude, accepting their circumstances without judging those who caused their difficulties. This attitude is not merely "forgiving" or "accepting," but also a form of spiritual maturity that leads to inner peace and greater self-control. According to Kabat-Zinn (2003), a nonjudgmental attitude is the key to achieving inner peace, where individuals do not allow personal judgments or biases to interfere with the process of full awareness.

This nonjudgmental attitude allows the Pran Soeh community to avoid getting caught up in a cycle of hatred and revenge that could destroy their internal balance. For example, even though this community has been the target of discrimination and state oppression, they choose not to get caught up in narratives of hatred towards those involved in the repression. They do not judge the people who commit violence against them, but try to understand and accept that these actions occur within a larger social and political context.

The application of a nonjudgmental attitude also helps them maintain good relationships with various parties, including those who may not support their existence. By not judging, they create space for more constructive dialogue and the exchange of ideas without damaging intergroup relations. As suggested by Germer (2005), a nonjudgmental attitude is the basis of mindfulness, which allows individuals to live in the present moment without being burdened by prejudice or judgment of their experiences. This is an indispensable quality in the face of prolonged oppression, where the Pran Soeh community not only survives but also thrives by maintaining its peaceful values.

A nonjudgmental attitude also involves accepting reality without trying to force change on things that they cannot control. This is reflected in their sincere attitude towards what befalls them, which is part of their spiritual journey. In this case, sincerity does not mean passivity. However, instead of accepting everything with an open heart while continuing to strive to remain on the path of truth and

morality, they adhere to.

### 3.2.4 Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a profound process that enables individuals or groups to evaluate their experiences and deepen their understanding of their circumstances and the world around them (Garland et al., 2015). In the context of the Pran Soeh community, self-reflection is an important aspect of how they deal with difficult situations and social pressures. Through this process, they not only seek solutions to external problems but also strive to understand and align themselves with God's will and the greater laws of nature.

This contemplative process has a strong foundation in spiritual teachings that emphasize self-control and inner peace. For example, in the face of stigmatization and marginalization, this community seeks to view their negative experiences as part of a spiritual test that must be accepted with an open heart and patience. This is reflected in their continued engagement in self-reflection and introspection, and in their seeking a deeper understanding of the meaning of their suffering. As explained by Wong (2009), self-reflection is an essential tool for self-development and the attainment of wisdom, enabling individuals to see more clearly their purpose in life and how they can contribute to the world in a more meaningful way.

The early era was a time of reflection for Pran Soeh. After seeing the poverty, colonialism, and various crimes in the environment around him, Sastrasuwignya meditated and practiced asceticism in places considered to have strong magical auras, such as mountains or beaches. After more than 15 years of contemplation and self-reflection, Sastrasuwignya finally received a revelation. After receiving the revelation, Pran Soeh continued to reflect deeply on his life journey, full of struggles. He realized that the bitter experiences he had gone through had shaped his determination and inner clarity to carry out his spiritual mission. In full consciousness, he saw himself no longer as an ordinary human being but as a person guided by the Almighty to uphold sacred values for humanity. This reflection led him to understand that holiness is not a passive gift but an active responsibility to maintain inner balance and to set an example for others.

The Old Order era was the most dramatic. The events of the Communist uprising in Indonesia in 1965, which left deep trauma, were not only experienced individually but also took root as a social wound in the lives of Pran Soeh's followers. The stigma that has been attached for generations has created psychological and social burdens that limit the community's freedom to express its beliefs openly. In the context of self-reflection, this bitter experience is understood not merely as a historical tragedy but as a collective historical burden that shapes a shared awareness of identity and spiritual continuity. This reflective process affirms that collective suffering can be a source of strength for formulating mindfulness strategies that emphasize acceptance, full awareness, and inner transformation. Thus, the self-reflection of the Pran Soeh community shows how historical trauma can be transformed into constructive spiritual energy to sustain local beliefs amid Indonesia's socio-political dynamics.

During the New Order era, the policy of listing only five official religions in the identity column of identity cards led to significant marginalization of belief groups in Indonesia. This condition forced the Pran Soeh community and other belief communities to engage in deep self-reflection on their spiritual identity and the sustainability of their existence amid state pressure. Complexity arose when the inclusion of one of the five religions on identity cards administratively negated their existence as authentic belief groups. In this context, self-reflection becomes an important means of negotiating space for existence while maintaining the continuity of local spirituality. Thus, this collective contemplation is not only a response to political pressure but also a strategy of self-awareness aimed at maintaining the existence of religious sects in Indonesia's socio-religious landscape.

For the Pran Soeh community, contemplation is also a means of developing inner resilience and maintaining peace amid adversity. This is one way for them to remain steadfast in their principles, even under intense pressure. They realize that although the outside world may not always support them, by maintaining peace of mind and living life with full awareness, they can overcome all challenges. As suggested by Hanh (2014), contemplation is not only about seeking answers but also about developing

awareness of oneself and the world, so that every action becomes wiser and more loving.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study reveals that Pran-Soeh, as a new belief system growing in Indonesia, cannot be separated from experiences of systematic repression and marginalization, both structurally and culturally. This phenomenon has shaped the unique characteristics of this community's belief system and social expression. This local belief community prefers non-confrontational strategies and mindfulness as collective approaches to responding to a century of repression. Matters beyond the community's control are transcended to God, the ruler of the universe, in the hope that natural mechanisms will work.

This approach not only maintains the community's internal sustainability but also symbolically resists state domination. These findings make an important contribution to the study of religion and social movements, particularly in seeing how local faith communities develop forms of resistance rooted in spiritual ethics. How the Pran-Soeh community responds to repression shows the potential of local religions to respond to the injustices they face with a peaceful attitude. In addition, the findings of this study provide a new perspective on the character of a local belief. The struggle for the legality of the Pran-Soeh belief, which had been ignored, was not fought with demonstrative attitudes but was responded to peacefully and with full awareness. The teachings of Pran-Soeh became a unique form of political agency, born of reflective local Javanese spirituality and characterized by a distinctiveness from other religions and beliefs.

This study has limitations regarding access to state actors involved in the repression of the Pran-Soeh community. In contrast, internally, the number of figures with access to data is minimal, so data triangulation has not been optimal. The second and third generations of this community also have very little understanding of the structure of beliefs and the structure of the struggle, so there are relatively few reliable informants. Further research is recommended to conduct a comparative study of several local beliefs in Indonesia to enrich our understanding of how local spirituality shapes survival strategies in the face of structural and cultural pressures.

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