

THE RESILIENCE OF MUSLIM CONVERTS IN UNDERSTANDING ISLAM: THE ROLE OF AL-AKBAR MOSQUE FOR POST-CONVERSION ACCOMPANIMENT

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Abstract: This article describes the way Muslim converts think and understand Islam after their conversion and how they pursue a moderate Islam in the post-conversion accompaniment provided by the al-Akbar mosque, Surabaya. The converts gain various Islamic knowledge as their initial foundation to know Islam. Since each of the Muslim converts has various interests in Islam, which might come from either internal or external factors, the post-conversion accompaniment provided by al-Akbar mosque has greatly helped converts' lives. The finding shows that Muslim converts have found resilience in controlling their emotions, a sense of optimism after converting to Islam. Al-Akbar mosque was chosen as the place for pronouncing the faith and for studying the religion since many believe that the mosque provides direction and technical guidance on how to embrace Islam righteously. Moderate Islam is the motto of the al-Akbar mosque, which teaches tolerance by respecting views or thought about Islam. This knowledge strengthens their resilience and intensifies their faith to comprehend Islam consistently and to engender a strong generation committed to maintaining Islamic spiritual values.

Keywords: Moderat Islam; Islamic knowledge; mosque; Muslim convert; Al-Akbar mosque.

Introduction

Muslim convert (*mualaf*) is a term for a man or a woman who has just converted to Islam.¹ The conversion usually takes place in a mosque in which a man would pronounce the faith or *shahāda*. Religious conversion means leaving the old belief towards a new one which is caused by internal and external factors.² The accompaniment and the guidance given to the converts are means of *da'wa*³ aimed to deliver religious messages comprehensively. The given religious guidance on the faith for the new converts⁴ aimed to be the foundation for them to remain committed to the faith. The context of faith becomes a reference in determining one's Islamic direction, especially in the early accompaniment process. The accompaniment is not only around the matter of religious concepts and rituals but also touches on their economic problem caused by family break-ups or community ignorance.⁵ The role of the mosque missionary work (*da'wa masjid*) is to improve the well-being of society⁶ and to be the source of knowledge and the center of the worship community.

The conversion impacts their religiosity and social support and resilience that brings forth positive personality, optimism, and self-

¹ Azman Ab Rahman et al., "Sorotan Literatur Kajian Penentuan Status Mualaf Kepada Mukalaf di Malaysia," *Syariah and Law Discourse* 1, no. 1 (2020), 41-45. The term converts have various names such as; new brothers, Muslim brothers, our brothers and converts. Irwan, "Penggunaan Istilah Mualaf dalam Kalangan Mualaf di Malaysia", *Jurnal Inpad* 6, no.1 (2015), 111-124.

² Massimo Leone, *Religious Conversion and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 81-84.

³ Accompaniment and guidance for converts can be done by clerics or kiai and mosque institutions as well as community institutions that aims to propagate Islam. Preaching to the converts must be effective and easy to understand through the effectiveness of the *da'wa*. See Roslieza Rosli et al., "Pilot Study of Instrument Questionnaire for Effectiveness Dakwah Activities of Non-Governmental Organization (Ngo) to Mualaf," *Bitara International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2020), 78-98.

⁴ Anton Widodo, "Urgensi Bimbingan Keagamaan Islam terhadap Pembentukan Keimanan Mualaf," *Jurnal Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2019), 66-90. <https://doi.org/10.32332/jbpi.v1i01.1476>.

⁵ M. Zaky Mubarak Lubis, "Strategi Pengembangan Ekonomi Mualaf di Kota Padang," *Jurnal Ilmiah Syi'ar* 19, no. 2 (2019), 199-211. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/syr.v19i2.2553>.

⁶ Qadaruddin, A. Nurkidam, and Firman, "Peran Dakwah Masjid dalam Peningkatan Kualitas Hidup Masyarakat," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2016), 222-239. <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v10i2.1078>.

confidence.⁷ Then, their religiosity affected their self-control and empathy for others.⁸ Emotional changes after the conversion among converts occur in their environment and interpersonal relation, as well as in their relationship with God.⁹ Regular prayer helps to strengthen their self-control and improves their quality of mental health.¹⁰ Moderate knowledge about Islam is introduced as early as possible to strengthen the faith, morality, and knowledge comprehensively to prevent any hard-line Islamic ideologies.

The guidance and post-conversion accompaniment given to the converts are to lead them to a right understanding of Islam. The accompaniment would be given following the technical guidance for the new converts based on the mosque's vision. Thus, this research employs a qualitative method to analyze the impact of conversion. Moreover, the method leads to a kind of research that relies on description and analysis based on a theory and data with an in-depth interview technique.¹¹ The four informants from Muslim converts who conduct the accompaniment at al-Akbar mosque are Choliq Idris, Andika, Cici Muarifah, and Dian.

To acquire an obvious explanation about Islam and how the converts understand Islam can be seen in the following references such as Abudin Nata,¹² Rokhis,¹³ Lewis Rambo,¹⁴ M. Quraish

⁷ Aris Setiawan and Niken Titi Pratitis, "Religiusitas, Dukungan Sosial dan Resiliensi Korban Lumpur Lapindo Sidoarjo," *Persona: Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia* 4, no. 2 (2015), 137-144. <https://doi.org/10.30996/persona.v4i02.555>.

⁸ Rina Mariana, "Resiliensi Mualaf Laki-laki Pascakekerasan dalam Beragama," *Psyche 165 Journal* 12, no. 2 (2019), 193-201. <https://doi.org/10.29165/psikologi.v12i2.260>.

⁹ Arafat Noor, "Perubahan Kelekatan Emosional Pasca Konversi di Kalangan Mualaf," *Jurnal Penelitian Agama* 1, no. 1 (2020), 36-48.

¹⁰ Royanulloh and Budi Yahya Haerudin, "Rutinitas Shalat sebagai Penguat *Self Control* untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Kesehatan Jiwa," *Madani* 1, no. 2 (2019), 172-183.

¹¹ John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (London: Sage Publication, 2007), 15.

¹² The book explains the principles of Islamic teaching based on the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith and facts of Islamic history with Islamic principles such as human nature, balanced, and in accordance with the demands of the age. Abuddin Nata, *Studi Islam Komprehensif* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2015).

¹³ Embracing Islam is a choice through the process of reflection, self-awareness and commitment that accept the consequences. Rokhis, "Memaknai Pesan Islam, Studi Fenomenologi Mualaf di Purwokerto," *International Conference of Moslem Society* 1 -(2016), 346-354. <https://doi.org/10.24090/icms.2016.2412>.

Shihab,¹⁵ Paul C. Vitz,¹⁶ and M. Ali Haidar.¹⁷ The works have a crucial explanation about understanding the change of belief and introducing Islam, the faith, and the development of Islam.

This article aimed to explain the commitment of converts to understand Islam concerning the impact of the conversion on individual, family, and the community lives. Besides, this study also talks about a pattern of accompaniment provided by the al-Akbar mosque and its moderate Islam and raises a question of whether the teaching of Islam in the mosque can be foundational in understanding Islam or it is just a formality.

What the Converts Experience after their Conversion

Religious conversion has been caused by various reasons. One of the converts shared her story: “I am a 47-year-old woman; becoming a convert is my dream for a long time. My parents are Christians, but my grandparents are Muslims. The intention to become a Muslim began when I saw my grandparents learning about Islam that one day I decided to learn it myself and study Islam in comparison to other religions”.¹⁸ The phenomenon of religious conversion by finding various arguments is cognitive intelligence and critical thinking in approaching religion; searching for information,

¹⁴ Mental preparation is the main factor before non-Muslim converts to Islam. Islam as a new choice of belief. Lewis R. Rambo, “Theories of Conversion, Understanding and Interpreting Religious Change,” *Social Compass* 46, no. 3 (1999), 259-271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776899046003003>.

¹⁵ All incidents that occur to human beings are God’s Destiny, Allah is everywhere in every phenomenon, and belief in Allah is Important to determine the direction of the Converts’ religiosity. M. Quraish Shihab, *Dia Dimana-Mana, “Tangan” Tuban di Balik Setiap Fenomena* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati Group, 2020).

¹⁶ Religion is behavior. If the behavior is not in accordance with its Religion, then the person has not religious yet. Paul C. Vitz, *Religion as Psychology: the Cult of Self-Worship* (United State America-Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 26.

¹⁷ Islam is growing rapidly because of the encouragement of the two largest organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, in which the struggle of Independence and Islam in Indonesia colors the development of global Islam. M. A-li Haidar, *Nahdlatul Ulama dan Islam di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fikih dalam Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1994).

¹⁸ She worked as a government employee in Surabaya. She said: “Alhamdulillah, in March 2018, I vowed to become a Muslimah for the first time at Masjid al-Akbar Surabaya and the following year, my husband followed and pledged to become a convert too”. Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

examining and criticizing the old religion, embracing the new one (Islam), and finally deciding.¹⁹

Another cause of the conversion is marriage. The decision is often made when two couples want to get married and be together in life. A convert admitted that his conversion to Islam is because he wants to marry his wife, who is a Muslim woman and because having the same religious affiliation will make the marriage easier. He chose Islam simply because his wife is a Muslim.²⁰ The phenomenon of religious conversion caused by marriage is a common thing and occurs in many regions. Being a Muslim because of a love affair strengthens the relationship between the two²¹ so that they can live a harmonious family with the same religious belief.

Another convert said, "I embraced Islam and pronounced the faith because I want to educate my child to be a better person. My neighbor suggested that our child should be circumcised first. Religions other than Islam have no circumcision obligations, so I firmly started studying Islam after converting to Islam".²² His interest to convert to Islam came from his neighborhood where the people gave advice and messages of Islam, which one of which is to get rid of hesitation by becoming a Muslim.²³

¹⁹ Eddy Saputra, "Konversi Agama Ditinjau dari Perspektif Kecerdasan Kognitif dan Berfikir Kritis," *SAP: Susunan Artikel Pendidikan* 4, no. 3 (2020), 267-273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/sap.v4i3.6291>.

²⁰ I decided to convert to Islam in 2017. My wife has changed the family lifestyle to make it more harmonious. I thank Allah for this gift, where my family always supports us, even though many of us have different religions. Interview with Andika, Surabaya, January 14, 2020.

²¹ At first, it was just a phenomenon of marriage of different religions, but we finally married by embracing Islam because we had children outside of marriage. Riris Sijabat, "Pernikahan Antar Agama (Studi Fenomenologi pada Konversi Agama Karena Menikah di Kecamatan Sidikalang, Sumatera Utara)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Sosial & Ilmu Politik* 3, no. 1 (2018), 776-789. Cohesiveness in the family encourages one of the couples to change their beliefs, but in the end, there is feeling of togetherness, and nobody feels right or wins in building family. Rani Dwisaptani and Jenny Lukito Setiawan, "Konversi Agama dalam Kehidupan Pernikahan," *Humaniora* 20, no. 1 (2008), 327-339. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.948>.

²² Previously I was a Buddhist who never wanted to know about Islam but, because of my neighbor's environment who told me about the importance of circumcision in Islam then, I firmly converted to Islam in 2018 at Al-Akbar mosque. Alhamdulillah my garment business was successful and now i live in religious environment. Interview with Cici Muarifah, Surabaya January 15, 2020.

²³ Rokhis, "Memaknai Pesan Islam", 346.

Post-conversion experiences affect individual, family, and social life. Personally, Islam demanded a change in a convert's past habit after pronouncing *shahāda* and lead the convert to be committed and consistent in his words and heart because there is no true god (deity) but God (Allah), and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God. "Therefore, I have avoided a kind of activity, such as the offering to the ancestral spirits".²⁴ The commitment is that every Muslim has to be monotheistic both in his heart and words because Allah is one or the one that cannot be compared to anything.²⁵ "For me, prayer creates awareness to be more disciplined. One of them is dawn prayer. it is hard because I usually wake up late. After my conversion, I am becoming used to getting up early."²⁶ Discipline adopted by converts creates a spirit to live better than before. Performing daily prayers teaches Muslims to be and enables us to internalize discipline values in worship.²⁷

They are also personally impacted by the Ramadan fasting, "I really became more patient, including with the extreme hunger. The toughest challenge when fasting is that I have to resist food temptation in front of my eyes when I am hungry. I cannot take it and have to avoid it".²⁸ Ramadan fasting held for a whole month is an obligation for Muslims,²⁹ and it gives pleasure when the fasting break comes. From a global health perspective, fasting can benefit the body and cure diseases. Besides, a convert will have a strong personality by following Islamic teaching despite difficulties in living and communicating with the family.

The biggest challenge for being a Muslim convert is his or her family who is non-Muslims. A convert told her story: "My sister is from a Catholic family, so she (my sister) was furious even if we met in a family gathering. When we did a handshake and another physical contact, she said, "I feel disgusted to do this with you". But I do not mind it; maybe this is a test to get God's blessing."³⁰ The sad feeling

²⁴ Interview with Cici Muarifah, Surabaya, January 15, 2020.

²⁵ Al-Qur'an, 112: 1-4.

²⁶ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

²⁷ Moch Yasyakur, "Strategi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Menanamkan Kedisiplinan Beribadah Salat Lima Waktu," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 9 (2017), 35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30868/ei.v5i09.86>.

²⁸ Interview with Andika, Surabaya, January 14, 2020.

²⁹ Al-Qur'an, 2: 183.

³⁰ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

shown by the convert above, followed by her submission to God, teaches the importance of determination, patience, and sincerity. Submission to God is a wise and smart way to deal with life problems.³¹

Moreover, a family financial situation is also a challenge for a convert, “I have experienced an economic crisis. I did not get help from my family that they usually provide. However, the neighboring environment had been quite helpful, and God provides sustenance for us gradually.”³² Islam teaches that our neighbors and we are supposed to foster empathy with each other.³³ Among the virtues of life are to share food with the neighbors, treat them as the closest relatives, and work together on the values of humanity.³⁴

Becoming a convert needs support from the environment. A woman stated, “Initially, I tried to wear *hijab* only on Friday. Then, my leader congratulated me and supported my commitment. Now, I wear *hijab* with my uniform consistently at the office from Monday to Friday. Since then, all my friends at the office endlessly congratulate me, and I thought that wearing a *hijab* is an obligation, not merely a fashion”.³⁵ Wearing a *hijab* is a Muslim woman’s obligation which is mentioned in the Qur’ān³⁶ and has become a lifestyle that configures a particular community, including a popular culture that is a part of Muslim communities.

The post-conversion period is a struggle to adapt and gradually grow the spirit to be committed to the path. Some might start from the crisis of confidence before embracing Islam and would receive a warm welcome by the witnesses after pronouncing the faith.³⁷ The emotional connection would occur between converts and fellow

³¹ Ririn Astutiningrum, *Kepada Allah Aku Berserah: Cerdas dan Bijak Menyikapi Problem Kehidupan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2019), 188-192.

³² Interview with Andika, Surabaya, January 14, 2020.

³³ One of the neighboring ethics is helping each other or helping people who need helps. Al-Qur’ān: 4:36.

³⁴ Sabir Maidin, “Keutamaan Hidup Bertetangga (Suatu Kajian Hadis),” *Jurnal Al-Qadau: Peradilan dan Hukum Keluarga Islam* 4, no. 2 (2018), 199–222. <https://doi.org/10.24252/al-qadau.v4i2.5691>.

³⁵ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

³⁶ Verses that explain the law of the *hijab*, such as: al-Qur’ān: 33: 35, 59; Al-Qur’ān: 24: 31.

³⁷ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020; Interview with Andika, Surabaya, January 14, 2020; Interview with Cici Muarifah, Surabaya, January 15, 2020.

Muslims when they know each other. The first meeting and the impression create an emotional and moral relationship in the new family after conversion.³⁸ The support and the self-confidence change the mindset and old habit into a strong Muslim.

The understanding of Islam demands a religious life attitude. Religious behavior and morality is a method of acquiring the right mindset based on religious knowledge. Thus, morality occupies a crucial role in generating good deeds, a sense of responsibility to one's self, to the community, and God.³⁹

Muslim converts will be agents of the community who spread morality to the people around them. The adaptive personality of a Muslim will form an inclusive mindset. The mindset based on certain Islamic knowledge is important in a way that it can form varieties of attitudes such as exclusive or inclusive, and fanatic or tolerant. When referring to the closed classical Islamic understanding, one will bring forth an exclusive, rigid, fanatic, and anarchist attitude.⁴⁰ On the other hand, when one adopts the modern Islamic understanding, the concept of *wasatīyya* (the middle way) or Islamic moderation, the mindset will give birth to a more inclusive attitude as it teaches fairness, balanced way, common good orientation, and proportionality in life.⁴¹

By adopting the right mindset, the converts carry an optimistic, independent, and open attitude toward changes. It is through understanding and practicing Islam as religious behavior.⁴² One is

³⁸ Nur Najwa Hanani Abdul Rahman et.al., “Hubungan Emosi dan Akhlak dalam Kekeluargaan Saudara Baru Selepas Memeluk Islam (Relation Between Emotions and Morality in Muallafs’ Family Relationship after the Conversion),” *Umran - International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 6, no. 3-2 (2020), 55-66.

³⁹ Ipanang, “Filsafat Akhlak dalam Konteks Pemikiran Etika Modern dan Misticisme Islam Serta Kemanusiaan,” *Kuriositas: Media Komunikasi Sosial dan Keagamaan* 10, no. 1 (2017), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.35905/kur.v10i1.581>.

⁴⁰ Ichwansyah Tampubolon, “Struktur Paradigmatik Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman Klasik: Dampaknya terhadap Pola Pikir, Sikap, dan Perilaku Keberagamaan,” *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 37, no. 2 (2016), 272-289. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v37i2.83>.

⁴¹ Muhammad Khairan Arif, “Moderasi Islam (*Wasatbiyah Islam*) Perspektif al-Qur’ān, As-Sunnah Serta Pandangan Para Ulama dan Fuqaha,” *al-Risalah* 11, no. 1 (2020), 22-43. <https://doi.org/10.34005/alrisalah.v11i1.592>.

⁴² Vitz, *Religion as Psychology*, 26.

ready to explore the potential of being an ideal Muslim.⁴³ Converts will find their identity as inclusive and tolerant Muslims because they have experienced various challenges. Strong religious motivation can change the mindset of converts. Furthermore, spiritual experiences can solidify their faith that will increase their self-confidence and positive thinking which fosters a strong Muslim personality.

The Accompaniment Model for the Converts at al-Akbar Mosque Surabaya

Al-Akbar mosque can accommodate the capacity of 36,000 worshippers. The mosque building area is 28.509 m², built on August 4, 1995, which was initiated by the mayor of Surabaya, H. Soenarto Soemoprawiro. The first stone was put down by the vice president of Indonesia, Tri Sutrisno, and completed in 2001. Then, the mosque was inaugurated by President KH. Abdurrahman Wahid on November 10, 2000, and became the largest mosque in East Java. The interior design of the mosque was decorated with typical Islamic elements.⁴⁴

There are some supporting facilities at the mosque such as; education center, Edu-park, library, polyclinic, *tibb al-nabawi*, tower, *infāq* facilities and practical instructions for converts.⁴⁵ These facilities are the attraction of the mosque since it can provide information and public education to the community. A mosque management system is a form of social worship aimed at community empowerment.⁴⁶ The mosque is also attractive for those who want to embrace Islam because the building looks magnificent.

Among the important roles of the mosque is to prepare technical guidelines for those who want to become a Muslim convert. The facility for the practical guidance for converts is an important part which includes: the pronouncement of the faith or *shahāda* and the accompaniment of the converts after the conversion. The

⁴³ Toto Tasmara, *Menuju Muslim Kaffah: Menggali Potensi Diri* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2000), 9.

⁴⁴ Laksmi Kusuma Wardani and Arinta Prilla Gustinantari, "Penerapan Elemen Hias Pada Interior Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya," *Dimensi Interior* 6, no. 2 (2008), 99-110.

⁴⁵ Interview with Choliq Idris, Surabaya, March 21, 2020.

⁴⁶ Lilam Kadarin Nuriyanto, "Pengaruh Pengelolaan Masjid terhadap Pemberdayaan Umat di Kota Surabaya," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 11, no. 4 (2018), 749-782. <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v11i4.69>.

procedures that must be passed by a prospective convert start from mental preparation, administrative issues, the pronouncement procession, introducing to the basics of faith and how to live with the faith.⁴⁷

The purpose of the *da'wah* strategy for converts conducted by Masjid al-Akbar is to strengthen the foundation of the converts' faith. In this case, a prospective convert is supposed to be mentally prepared and has to believe wholeheartedly that being a Muslim is his or her choice, not because of any compulsion or oppression from others.⁴⁸ Psychological preparedness is the main factor before one decides to convert or adhere to a new religion from his or her previous religion. Preceding by a crisis of belief, one meets or consults and is committed to and accepts the consequences of his or her choice.⁴⁹ These processes of conversion must be prepared by a prospective convert in addition to administrative requirements and mental conditions.

A prospective convert should be prepared with the *shahāda's* operating instructions, which is an obligation for a convert mentioned in the pillars of Islam.⁵⁰ The *shahāda* introduces monotheism or study of '*aqidah Islamiyya*'⁵¹ by recognizing the obligatory, *jāiz*, and impossible nature of God. Converts have testified or promised that there is no god but Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. All the incidents that are experienced by a human being are the decrees of God because Allah is to be found in every phenomenon.⁵² Belief in God is the most important teaching for the converts before introducing the derivative knowledge of Islam.

After pronouncing the *shahāda*, the accompaniment for the convert is focused on the foundation of faith such as (1) *Aqidah* or

⁴⁷ Administrative requirements for prospective converts include: fill out the pledge form, submit a copy of id card and passport for foreigners, pass photo size 3x4 two sheets, and two Muslim witnesses. Interview with Choliq Idris, Surabaya, March 21, 2020.

⁴⁸ Samsul Arifin and Imam Syafi'i, "Dakwah Mualaf Strategi dan Pola Dakwah untuk Mualaf di Masjid Nasional al-Akbar Surabaya," *Mukammil: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 1, no. 1 (2018), 81-99.

⁴⁹ Rambo, "Theories of Conversion", 259-271.

⁵⁰ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

⁵¹ Nurhadi, "Kajian Tauhid Pelajaran Aqidah di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hidayah Rutan Kelas I B Pekanbaru," *Pandawa* 2, no. 1 (2020), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.36088/pandawa.v2i1.384>.

⁵² Shihab, *Dia Dimana-mana*.

Belief in God, (2) the Qur'ān which is Muslim holy book, (3) Prophet Muhammad as a role model in Islam, (5) *Fiqh* that teaches how to purify oneself through rituals, (5) fasting that teaches how to control oneself from worldly desires. (6) alms that teach about giving and sharing the wealth with others. (7) Hajj teaches us how to be grateful to God. (8) believe in *qodā'* and *qadar* (God's decree).⁵³ Introduction to Islam is through an integrated understanding of the pillars of Islam and faith.

The introduction of Islam starts from the basics, namely the internalization of the creed (*aqīdah*) as the indicator of human behavior and a way of life referring to the Qur'ān.⁵⁴ The Qur'ān is the guidelines and the source of Islamic law. Al-Akbar mosque elaborates the meaning of *aqīdah* as belief, faithfulness, safety, protection, and putting something in a safe place. Believing in God means justifying his existence as the creator of heaven and earth and believe that God is the All-knowing of the unseen realm and the real world.⁵⁵ God is the creator of the universe that nothing has the right to be worshiped except God, the All-mighty who cannot be associated with anything but Himself.⁵⁶

Another Islamic foundation is the introduction to the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet and a model for human morality. The prophet's teaching is mainly concerning intellectualism and spirituality. The purpose of his mission is to drive people to righteousness, goodness, progress, and success.⁵⁷ The existence of morality in human life is quite important because it has its characteristic and feature in Islam which is the exercise of right and obligation. Islamic teaching shows that ideal morality is gained by fulfilling the obligations, giving the rights of those who are entitled to receive it,⁵⁸ and obey all commands and prohibitions of God. Besides the moral issues, Prophet Muhammad is also a model in the leadership grounded in Islamic political ethics in the Medina period.

⁵³ Interview with Choliq, Surabaya, February 2, 2020.

⁵⁴ Fitriana Rusyay Ali Ahmad, "Urgensi Penanaman Aqidah dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Pendidikan Tadarus Tarbawy* 1, no. 2 (2019), 99-108.

⁵⁵ Interview with Cholik Idris, Surabaya, April 2, 2020.

⁵⁶ Al-Qur'ān: 112: 1-4.

⁵⁷ Interview with Cholik Idris, Surabaya, April 3, 2020

⁵⁸ Akilah Mahmud, "Ciri dan Keistimewaan Akhlak dalam Islam," *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman* 13, no. 1 (2019), 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.24252/sulesana.v13i1.9949>.

This model is relevant to adapt to the Indonesian political context. The leadership values carried by the prophet include brotherhood of Islam (*ukhuwwa Islāmiyya*), deliberation, (cooperation) *al-ta'āwun*, and justice.⁵⁹

The next lesson is the introduction to Islam. When a man embraces Islam, he is called a Muslim. Islam means surrendering to God, to be submissive and obedient, escaping from mental and physical illness, and being in peace with the feeling of safety.⁶⁰ Islam is the bearer of grace for the universe. One of the prominent Indonesian Islamic figures who propagate a holistic face of Islam is KH. Hasyim Muzadi.⁶¹ He succeeded in displaying a holistic face of Islam. Islam as the religion of the grace for the universe (*rahmat li al-'ālamīn*) becomes the most reasonable concept and the most adopted way of life by the Indonesian cultures with all the diversity.

After their introduction to Islam, the converts are taught about the Qur'ān as the holy book and the source of Islamic law. The Qur'ān is taught to the converts starting from the introduction to the definition of the revelations of God, the way they were revealed to mankind, the contents of the Qur'ān, the way it is recited and understood.⁶² This holy book should be studied regularly to obtain a proper understanding because the verses of the Qur'ān require comprehensive interpretations. Furthermore, the presence of interpretation makes it easier to understand the Qur'ān as found in many Indonesian Qur'ānic exegeses yet might be difficult to be digested by the converts or the common people.⁶³ Studying the Qur'ān requires an accompaniment as one of the converts said, "I find it much easier to read and understand the Qur'ān which is taught

⁵⁹ Rahmat Hidayat and Suwanto, "Membumikan Etika Politik Islam Nabi Muhammad Saw Periode Madinah dalam Konteks Perpolitikan Indonesia," *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020), 124-141. DOI: 10.30829/juspi.v3i2.4469.

⁶⁰ Choliq Idris, "Petunjuk Praktis Mualaf" in www.masjidalakbar.or.id/ Accessed January 21, 2020.

⁶¹ Muhammad Makmun Rasyid, "Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin Perspektif KH. Hasyim Muzadi," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2016), 93-116. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2016.11.1.93-116>.

⁶² Interview with Choliq Idris, Surabaya, March 21, 2020.

⁶³ Muhammad Faisal, "Khazanah Studi Kitab Tafsir di Indonesia (Kajian Terhadap Kitab Tafsir Ringkas Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia)," *Islam Universalia* 1, no. 1 (2019), 83-107. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3236464>.

by the teachers at the al-Akbar mosque, they teach patiently and employ an easy-to-understand method".⁶⁴

Then, the Islamic guidance on *fiqh* includes how to purify oneself and the body (*ṭabārah*) from excrement or uncleanness, which causes an imperfection to the implementation of rituals or worship. Islam teaches that purification creates many characteristics, attitudes, and values that impact human behavior. *Ṭabārah* encompasses a variety of dimensions, i.e. *mu'āmalah*, *aqīdah*, morality, and so forth that is aimed to conduct a physical and spiritual purity.⁶⁵ *Ṭabārah* is an Islamic teaching agenda that is a new experience for a convert as one said, "I knew about purification after converting to Islam, I thought that being clean was pure, pure is certainly clean but clean is not necessarily pure".⁶⁶ The experience of the purification practice encourages us to learn more about Islam.

The pillars of Islam are the basic values every Muslim must learn to explore further about Islam, for they are the fundamental knowledge. Furthermore, to avoid the occurrence of any deviations, the religious teachings should be practiced as affection and psychomotor aspect and implementation, not only on its cognition aspect.⁶⁷ The pillars of Islam are the first thing to learn by the converts, which include: *first*, *shahāda*. *Second*, prayer. *Third*, zakat. *Fourth*, fasting, and *fifth*, hajj for those who are capable of making the pilgrimage. The pillars of Islam are the converts' main concern because it is the basic foundation and rituals that solidifies Islam.⁶⁸

The pillars of faith strengthen the foundations of Islam by believing in God, believing that the Holy Qur'ān is the words of God, believing that the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of God, believing in God's angel, Believing that the judgment day is true and will come, believing in *qadā'* and *qadar* (fate and decree of God). The faith must be solidified within every Muslim by believing the pillars

⁶⁴ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

⁶⁵ Mohammad Shodiq Ahmad, "Ṭabārah: Makna *Zawābir* dan *Bawāṭib* dalam Bersuci (Perspektif Studi Islam Komprehensif)," *Mizan: Journal of Islamic Law* 2, no. 1 (2018), 57-82. <https://doi.org/10.32507/mizan.v2i1.134>.

⁶⁶ Interview with Cici Muarifah, Surabaya, January 15, 2020.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Muhtar Arifin Sholeh, "Pola Penyimpangan Muslim terhadap Ajaran Agamanya: Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 1, No. 1 (2018), 1-21.

⁶⁸ Choliq Idris, "Petunjuk Praktis Mualaf" in www.masjidalakbar.or.id/ Accessed January 21, 2020.

and practicing the rituals in a real commitment that is directing all the behaviors on the right path, including all of the obligations to obey physically and mentally according to Islamic teachings.⁶⁹ By studying the pillars of faith, the converts are taught to increase their capacity from being Muslims to being great believers.⁷⁰

The introduction to Islam is a strategy to ground the vision and mission of al-Akbar mosque, emphasizing *istiqamah*, *uswab*, *mas'uliyya*, and *li jami' al-ummah*.⁷¹ The converts as part of Muslims who are reborn after pronouncing the *shahāda* al-Akbar mosque are expected to fight for their beliefs by becoming a moderate Muslim that is Muslims who can contribute to creating a tolerant and civilized community to personify a harmonious life with the adherents of other religions.⁷² A Muslim who has a passion for remaining in the faith and passionately spread the spirit of Islam in society. The accompaniment provided by the al-Akbar for the converts is designed to create a form of resilience that will make responsive, confident, and strong Muslims are living their lives amidst various obstacles and challenges. Thus, the resilience of a convert lies in his or her self transformation that enables him or her to balance the intelligence and emotions to produce an Islamic spiritual intelligence.⁷³

The Resilience of the Converts in Understanding Islam

After pronouncing the faith's testimonies, the converts are committed to the belief and are willing to implement the sharia-based on the Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and ḥadīth. According to Islam, every human being is born with the natural light of purity.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Mulyono, "Keistimewaan Istiqamah dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an," *Imtiyaz: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (2020), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.46773/imtiyaz.v4i1.61>.

⁷⁰ Interview with Choliq Idris, Surabaya, March 21, 2020.

⁷¹ Muktafi, "Pengarustamaan Islam Moderat di Masjid Nasional Al-Akbar Surabaya" (PhD diss., UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2019).

⁷² Zuhairi Misrawi, *Pandangan Muslim Moderat: Toleransi, Terorisme, dan Oase Perdamaian* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010).

⁷³ Vici Muhammad Fauzi and Kiki Zakiah, "Transformasi Jati Diri Muslim di Lingkungan Anggota Geng Motor," *Prosiding Jurnalistik* 3, no. 1 (2017), 15-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29313/.v0i0.5668>.

⁷⁴ The principles of Islamic teachings include: a) conformity to human nature (*muṭābaqah li fiṭrah al-nās*), b) balance (*tawāzūn*), c) in accordance with the times and places (*salih li kull zaman wa makān*), d) not bothering others (*lā tu'shshir al-nās*), e) in accordance with the development of science and technology (*muṭābaqah li al-'ilm wa al-tiknūlijyā*), f) based on research, g) future oriented (*muwajjih li al-zamān al-ātiya*), h)

The converts have chosen Islam as their religion through many questions and anxiety about their faith or their previous beliefs. According to Lewis Rambo's theory, religious conversion begins with hesitation, contemplation, and action to be committed and accept the consequences⁷⁵ to implement and be responsible.

Some converts such as Dian, Andika, and Muarifa practiced the Five Pillars of Islam, including the five daily prayers. They admitted that practicing prayers make their life more organized and disciplined since they have to do the prayers according to the standard time, and when they are on travel, they have to plan where they will hold the prayer.⁷⁶ Discipline means that converts are ready to take responsibility toward the obligatory things demanded by God, including practicing prayers. Moreover, the purpose of the prayer is to avoid cruelty and evil deeds.⁷⁷

Another obligation for a Muslim is giving alms or *zakāt*. It teaches humans to help poor people and empower them through an Islamic economy aimed to achieve a prosperous society. The converts who have received the teaching on alms are required to give their alms during Ramadan month or once in a year that includes *zakāt fitrah* and other alms types.⁷⁸ The converts admitted that giving alms has purified their selves and their wealth and has created a feeling of blessed that they are always given enough wealth for life.⁷⁹ Alms distribution is also regulated in Islam, including whoever is entitled to receive it.⁸⁰ The *zakāt* aimed to reduce poverty. It also has a positive correlation to economic growth and the principle of tolerance as it

equality (*al-musāwā*), i) justice (*al-'adl*), j) deliberation, k) brotherhood (*al-ukhuwwā*), and l) openness (*infital*). See Nata, *Studi Islam Komprehensif*.

⁷⁵ Rambo, "Theories of Conversion."

⁷⁶ Endi Hari Purwanto, "Standar dan Validasi Tabel Konversi Waktu Keberangkatan terhadap Waktu Salat di Pesawat," *Jurnal Standardisasi* 22, no. 1 (2020), 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31153/js.v22i1.751>.

⁷⁷ Al-Qur'an: 29: 45.

⁷⁸ Al-Qur'an, 9: 103.

⁷⁹ Interview with Dian, Surabaya, January 10, 2020.

⁸⁰ There are eight groups who are entitled to receive zakat: the poor, indigent, amil, converts, *riqab* (slave), *gharim* (people who owe), *fi sabilillah* (Islamic warriors) and *ibn sabil* (*musajir*). Siti Zalikha, "Pendistribusian Zakat Produktif dalam Perspektif Islam," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 15, no. 2 (2016), 304-319. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v15i2.547>.

disseminates a behavior that respects differences as an inevitability.⁸¹ In brief, alms foster empathy and engenders more generous people.

The converts find out that fasting in the month of Ramadan needs patience. Fasting teaches people to be patient to refrain from anger, and it forces them to control themselves. Fasting is a form of character building to bring forth the kind of sincere and trustworthy people who have values of honesty that their words and deeds can be trusted.⁸² For converts, fasting is to feel others' suffering, especially for those who are economically deficient, and training for Muslims to be more mature in life. Ramadan fasting carries a greater benefit for Muslims that is increasing their body immunity for mental health and leading them to be pious men.⁸³

The converts are also interested in making the pilgrimage (*hajj*) because they want to explore the Islamic horizon. As they should take two years to deepen Islam, they prepare the process of doing that. They understood that the pilgrimage is not just about the willingness and financial adequacy but also mental preparedness and the patience to wait in line to go there. The pilgrimage is expected to be a cultural pilgrimage. The spirit of pilgrimage aims to improve spirituality and social worship.⁸⁴ Muslims who are sufficiently capable of making the pilgrimage can improve the quality of their devotion to God.

All the converts share one belief about God's oneness, who has created heaven and earth and everything. The belief which is mentioned in the Qur'an is that there is no god but Allah.⁸⁵ The solid faith and the commitment to do regular worship is the converts' routine activities which underline discipline and responsibility that shape Muslims' real selves.

⁸¹ Ali Ridho and Thibburuhany, "Prinsip Toleransi Beragama sebagai Pondasi Membangun Peradaban Islam di Era Modern," *El-Afkar: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman dan Tafsir Hadis* 8, no. 1 (2019), 75-94. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/jpkth.v8i1.2-0-48>.

⁸² Saifullah, "Konsep Pembentukan Karakter Siddiq dan Amanah pada Anak Melalui Pembiasaan Puasa Sunat," *Jurnal Mudarrisuna: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 1 (2017), 77-102. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/jm.v7i1.1910>.

⁸³ Sumarno Adi Subrata and Merses Varia Dewi, "Puasa Ramadan dalam Perspektif Kesehatan: Literatur Review," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora* 15, no. 2 (2017), 241-262. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v15i2.1139>.

⁸⁴ Abdullah Thalib Thalib, "Haji Budaya dan Budaya Haji," *Tahdis: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Hadis* 10, no. 1 (2019), 40-53. <https://doi.org/10.24252/tahdis.v10i1.9856>.

⁸⁵ Al-Qur'an: 112: 1-4.

To understand Islam, the converts follow the technical instructions delivered by the teachers. Islamic teaching and method are grounded in al-Akbar mosque visions, including trustworthiness, *istiqāmah*, *uswab*, *mas'ūliyya*, and *li jami' al-ummah*.⁸⁶ The visions are the foundation of education for the convert. The converts are hoped to be honest Muslims to themselves and other people, obedient to the rules, be a good raw model for the public, and responsible for their deeds.

The converts implement the teaching of Islam based on the pillars of Islam and faith. They shared their stories about their conversion. After conversion, they had faced many problems and stayed committed to the faith and obedient to Muslims' obligations. The obedience will teach them to be a righteous Muslim who always hold onto the faith and avoid any bad deeds forbidden by religion. They also learn to be responsible for what they have done.

The basic foundations of Islam discussed above is similar to what Lewis Rambo called commitment and consequences in his theory.⁸⁷ Converts feel that Islamic teaching is attached to their hearts and minds, and they feel that God is always present for pious -- Muslims. Moreover, praying becomes a solution for all problems as the decrees of God. M. Quraish Shihab explained in his exegesis that God's 'hand' is behind all the phenomena.⁸⁸

The generation of Islam such as the converts must be directed to a clear and straightforward understanding of what has been practiced by the al-Akbar mosque to foster Islamic moderation or Islam *wasafiyya* by giving a right understanding and implementation of Islam in daily life.⁸⁹ The concept of Islamic moderation is the answer to Muslims who are still not convinced of Islam. They have to strengthen Islamic moderation and Muslims' religious culture in the form of Islamic brotherhood based on the doctrine of monotheism (*tawhīd*). Therefore, it is necessary to have a verification process (*tabayun*) when a dispute happens by returning to the trusted authority and propagating the tolerant attitude as well as maintaining good relations with the other people including the family and the relative (*silat al-raḥim*).

⁸⁶ Muktafi, "Pengarustamaan Islam Moderat".

⁸⁷ Rambo, "Theories of Conversion", 259-271.

⁸⁸ Shihab, *Dia Dimana-mana*.

⁸⁹ Arif, "Moderasi Islam", 22-43.

The converts are urged to implement Islam properly and to maintain good relations with their non-Muslim families, relatives, and coworkers without any discrimination. When facing the problems, they are advised to consult the teachers at the al-Akbar mosque. The converts will gradually become Muslims who have a solid faith and resilience manifested in their responsivity, confidence, and resilience. Islam has provided mercy and guidance for Muslims in living their lives. The essence of an inclusive and tolerant attitude builds harmony in diversity, reflecting Islam's identity, such as safety, peace, and submission to God.

Concluding Remarks

Muslim converts are a generation of Muslims who have a transformative mindset because they dare to make big changes in their lives. Being a convert is to pass through the crisis of self-confidence, a contemplation, and a dialogue with others. Being brave to make the decision and committed to the religion they choose is the consequence of the changes in the mindset.

The accompaniment model provided by al-Akbar helps converts to understand Islam. The mosque's vision bases the accompaniment activity and the studies on Islam. The basic Islamic knowledge helps to build the converts' perspective to see various phenomena in society. The studies on Islam at al-Akbar mosque become their capital to implement the teachings in the wider community. Ritual and social worship reflect an ideal Muslim who is always submitting to God and obeying his religious teaching.

As a generation of Muslims, the converts have the resilience to uphold and expand Islam gently. With the basic knowledge of Islam, they can digest various ideological phenomena that develop in society. Islam came as a bearer of mercy and guidance for Muslims to keep learning about Islam righteously. The challenges the converts are facing in their individual, families, and environmental levels are parts of the process to be true Muslims. Embracing Islam as it is without concerning which of the existing groups are truer over another is deemed better. In this case, they just follow the mosque's guidance and accompaniment, whose vision is moderate and acceptable in society.

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B. Interview

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