

Religious Moderation in Motion: Diaspora Identity, Institutional Practice, and the Wasatiyah Tradition Among Indonesian Migrants in Malaysia

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Abstract:

Religious moderation has emerged as a central commitment within contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly in societies marked by religious and cultural plurality. This study examines the implementation of moderate Islam among the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a religious community composed predominantly of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) who have established the surau as a hub for spiritual, social, and cultural activities. Employing a descriptive qualitative case-study design, the research draws on in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation to capture the lived religious experience of this diaspora community. The findings demonstrate that the congregation embodies four principal indicators of religious moderation as defined by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs: national commitment, as evidenced by their sustained patriotism and preference for Indonesian cultural products; tolerance, reflected in their respectful engagement with people of diverse ethnicities and faiths; an anti-violence orientation, manifest in pedagogical approaches that foreground gentleness and wisdom; and adaptability to local culture, seen in their participation in both homeland traditions such as Maulid Nabi observances and Malaysian communal customs. The study contributes to a growing body of scholarship on diaspora religiosity and offers practical insights for policy efforts aimed at fostering moderate Islamic values within multicultural migrant communities.

Keywords: Surau Syaichona Cholil Malaysia, Indonesian migrant workers, religious moderation, tolerance, moderate Islam.

Introduction

Religious moderation stands as one of the foundational principles governing harmonious social life in culturally plural societies. In Indonesia, the cultivation of moderate Islamic values has been elevated to a matter of state priority, particularly in light of mounting concerns over the diffusion of extremist and radical ideologies capable of undermining national cohesion. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has formally identified four key indicators by which religious moderation may be measured: national commitment, tolerance, opposition to violence, and the accommodation of local traditions that do not contravene core religious teachings.¹

National commitment, in this framework, denotes fidelity to the values enshrined in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, as well as to the territorial integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Tolerance encompasses respect for the beliefs, practices, and perspectives of those who profess different faiths or belong to distinct religious traditions. Anti-violence signifies an unequivocal rejection of coercive or destructive conduct undertaken in the name of religion, whether expressed physically or verbally. Accommodation of local culture, meanwhile, reflects an open and contextually sensitive attitude toward the diversity of human customs, provided such customs remain consonant with the foundational tenets of the faith.²

The question of how these values are sustained, or transformed, when Indonesian Muslims live and work beyond their homeland has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Malaysia is among the most prominent destinations for Indonesian migrant workers, with a substantial population engaged in both formal and informal employment sectors.³ The conditions of migrant life—characterized by social displacement, economic precarity, and exposure to markedly different cultural environments—render the maintenance of a moderate religious orientation at once more complex and more consequential.⁴ Diaspora communities in Malaysia encompass members from a wide range of Indonesian ethnic groups, including the Bugis, Malay, Minangkabau, Javanese, Madurese, Acehnese, and others.⁵ By 2024, the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur had recorded more than sixty-three associations organized along ethnic, regional, and religious lines—a

¹ Compilation Team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

² A. Arisman and R. K. Jaya, “Labour Migration in ASEAN: Indonesian Migrant Workers in Johor Bahru, Malaysia,” *Asian Education and Development Studies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 27–39.

³ Monica et al., “Strengthening the Islamic Identity of Indonesian Migrant Children in Malaysia Through Learning the Al-Quran,” *SCBD: Journal of Society, Community, and Business Development* 2, no. 2 (2024).

⁴ B. R. Sari, “Ringkasan Hasil Penelitian Peran Diaspora Akademisi dan Profesional Indonesia di Malaysia dalam Transfer Ilmu Pengetahuan di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Kajian Wilayah* 11, no. 2 (2020): 213–228.

⁵ Shohenuddin (Staf Atdikbud KBRI Kuala Lumpur), personal communication, 2024.

figure that underscores the depth and complexity of Indonesian communal life in Malaysia.⁶

Cultural diversity of this magnitude is inherently double-edged. It may function as a cohesive force, drawing disparate communities into productive dialogue and mutual enrichment; equally, it may occasion friction across cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries.⁷ In such an environment, the religious institution—whether mosque, surau, or *musholla*—assumes a role that extends well beyond the provision of a site for worship. It becomes a nexus of identity formation, communal solidarity, and normative instruction. The Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Kuala Lumpur exemplifies this dynamic. Established by and for Indonesian migrant workers, the surau has evolved into a center for religious, social, and cultural development, and as such occupies a pivotal position in shaping the religious attitudes and conduct of its congregation.

The concept of moderate Islam is neither novel nor marginal within the Islamic intellectual tradition.⁸ The Quranic injunction toward a middle path—reflected in the notion of *ummat wasatan* in Surah al-Baqarah (2:143)—has long been understood to counsel against the twin perils of excessive rigidity and unmoored permissiveness.⁹ The classical scholar Imam al-Ghazali articulated the principle of *wasatiyah* as the cornerstone of a balanced religious life, warning that extremism, fanaticism, and materialism each corrode the spiritual and moral equilibrium of individuals and communities alike.¹⁰ In the contemporary period, Yusuf al-Qardhawi has extended this framework through the concept of *maqasid al-syariah*, emphasizing the necessity of adapting legal and ethical reasoning to the relevant social, cultural, and historical contexts of Muslim life without sacrificing the essential purposes of the sacred law.¹¹ Moderate Islam, in this sense, is not a dilution of the faith but rather its most authentically human expression: a commitment to straight thinking (*i'tidal*) and balanced conduct (*wasatiyah*) oriented toward peace, civility, and the rejection of violence in all its forms.¹²

⁶ R. A. Saputri et al., “Membangun Wawasan Moderat dalam Konteks Masyarakat Multikultural dengan Nilai-Nilai Islam,” *Ar-Rosyad: Jurnal Keislaman dan Sosial Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (2023).

⁷ Anzaikhan and M. Anzaikhan, “The Moderate Islam and Its Influence on Religious Diversity in Indonesia,” *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 23, no. 2 (2022): 177–192.

⁸ A. S. Ma'arif and M. A. Ma'arif, “Penerapan Nilai Islam Moderat dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Perguruan Tinggi,” *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 19, no. 2 (2021): 187–203; M. Q. Shihab, *Wasathiyah: Wawasan Islam tentang Moderasi Beragama* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2019).

⁹ M. Q. Shihab, *Wasathiyah: Wawasan Islam tentang Moderasi Beragama* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2019).

¹⁰ S. Pahri et al., “Imam Al-Ghazali's Concept of Religious Counseling in Forming Moderate Attitudes,” *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 28, no. 1 (2024): 103; S. U. S. Mustaffa and A. M. Abadi, “Perkembangan Konsep Islam Moderat dan Implikasinya terhadap Keabsahan Pemerintahan Emiriah Arab Bersatu (UAE),” *Jurnal Wacana Sarjana* 8, no. 1 (2024): 1–24.

¹¹ Ebrahimi et al., “Moderation in Islam: A Comparative Case Study on Perception of International Students in Malaysia,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2022): 253–269.

¹² A. S. Robikhah et al., “Implementasi Indikator Moderasi Beragama pada Kearifan Lokal Paguyuban Mejing Tabon Yogyakarta untuk Mewujudkan SDGs” (2023).

A growing body of scholarship has engaged with these themes from varying disciplinary angles. Mustaffa and Abadi, writing from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, have investigated the historical development of the moderate Islam concept within the United Arab Emirates, arguing that the UAE government has deployed a tripartite strategy—repression of Islamist movements, control of religious institutions, and promotion of a simplified religious narrative—to consolidate the concept’s legitimacy and shore up monarchical authority.¹³ Their analysis highlights the extent to which the framing of Islamic moderation is never politically neutral, a finding with clear implications for the Indonesian context. Ebrahimi and colleagues, examining perceptions of moderation among international students in Malaysia, found that students from West Asia demonstrated significantly lower comprehension of and sympathy toward Islamic moderation than their counterparts from other parts of Asia, a pattern attributed to the influence of entrenched cultural chauvinism and particular doctrinal formations.¹⁴

At the level of local community practice, Robikhah and her team have documented the integration of religious moderation indicators into the *kearifan lokal* of the Paguyuban Mejing Tabon in Yogyakarta, revealing how the use of communal symbols, interfaith prayer, and traditional philosophy collectively enact a lived pluralism aligned with the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ moderation framework.¹⁵ Gufron’s study of Chinese Muslim converts at Masjid Lautze Jakarta adds a further dimension, showing how the spiritual motivations underlying conversion shape a distinctive form of moderate religiosity—compassionate, gentle, and deeply attentive to the humanity of the other—one nourished by the intellectual legacy of Haji Karim Oei and his inclusive understanding of Islamic modernism.¹⁶

The specifically transnational dimensions of Indonesian Muslim religious life have received attention from Rofiq and colleagues, who found that Muslim communities in Malaysia function simultaneously as centers of *da’wah*, platforms for the expression of piety, and networks of solidarity for female migrant workers—a finding that underscores the social as much as the spiritual significance of such communities.¹⁷ Shinta’s research on diaspora participation in Indonesian elections, meanwhile, reveals that geographic displacement correlates with lower civic engagement and heightened vulnerability to identity politics, while also underscoring

¹³ U. Gufron, “Corak Moderasi Beragama Keluarga Mualaf Tionghoa (Studi Kasus Jamaah Masjid Lautze Jakarta Pusat),” *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 12, no. 2 (2019): 205–232.

¹⁴ H. Rofiq et al., “Komunikasi Dakwah Komunitas Perempuan Pekerja Migran di Malaysia,” *Jurnal Kopis: Kajian Penelitian dan Pemikiran Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 4, no. 2 (2022): 94–106.

¹⁵ A. Admin and A. Shinta, “Meningkatkan Pemahaman Diaspora tentang Wawasan Nusantara sebagai Upaya untuk Menyukkseskan Pemilihan Umum,” *Journal Lemhannas RI* 7, no. 1 (2020): 4–15.

¹⁶ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat al-Muslimah* (Cairo: Dar al-Syuruq, 2001).

¹⁷ M. S. Huda and Y. Irwanto, “Resiliensi Muslim Moderat di Era Post Truth: Tipologi, Teori dan Praktik di Indonesia,” *El Buhuth: Borneo Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2021).

the transformative potential of diaspora communities as informal ambassadors for Indonesia abroad.¹⁸

What remains relatively unexplored, however, is a sustained ethnographic and qualitative investigation into how the specific indicators of religious moderation, as officially defined, are concretely instantiated within a single diaspora religious community in Malaysia. The present study addresses this lacuna by focusing on the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil in Kuala Lumpur. It does so through a theoretically pluralist lens that brings together the theory of moderate Islam, religious moderation theory, Henri Tajfel's social identity theory, Ravenstein's migration theory, and Émile Durkheim's theory of community and social solidarity.

Tajfel's social identity theory offers conceptual resources for understanding how Indonesian migrant workers negotiate and sustain Muslim identities within a multicultural Malaysian environment where religious and cultural differences are the norm rather than the exception.¹⁹ Ravenstein's migration theory, with its emphasis on the economic push-pull dynamics driving population movement, provides a structural account of why Malaysians have historically absorbed such large numbers of Indonesian workers and illuminates the conditions within which religious adaptation occurs.²⁰ Durkheim's sociology of religion, and particularly his account of how collective ritual generates social solidarity, furnishes a framework for interpreting the integrative function performed by the surau within the migrant community.²¹

Employing a qualitative case-study methodology,²² this research gathered data through in-depth interviews with congregation members, religious leaders, and community administrators; through participatory observation of religious activities within the surau; and through documentation, including digital content published on the institution's social media platforms.²³ Data analysis proceeded through thematic

¹⁸ M. Q. Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Cetakan 1 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2017).

¹⁹ H. Tajfel, *The Social Psychology of Minorities* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1992); G. Saloom and A. Ismail, "Validasi Pengukuran Identitas Sosial Versi Indonesia dengan Analisis Faktor Konfirmatori (CFA)," *Psikoborneo: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 10, no. 4 (2022): 761.

²⁰ E. G. Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 52, no. 2 (1889): 241–305; A. S. Abao, "Pola Migrasi dan Integrasi Penduduk di Wilayah Perbatasan Indonesia-Malaysia," *Proyeksi* 24, no. 1 (2019); S. P. Capaldi and M. P. Capaldi, *Migration in Southeast Asia* (Cham: Springer, 2021).

²¹ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

²² T. N. Fathurrozie et al., "Tinjauan Teori Solidaritas Sosial Emile Durkheim terhadap Pernikahan Dini di Desa Karangpuri Sidoarjo" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.); John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).

²³ M. Rahardjo, *Studi Kasus dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep dan Prosedurnya* (Malang: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2017); I. G. A. A. O. Dewi, "Understanding Data Collection Methods in Qualitative Research: The Perspective of Interpretive Accounting Research," *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy* 1, no. 1 (2022): 23–34; Karunarathna et al., "Comprehensive Data Collection: Methods, Challenges, and the Importance of Accuracy" (2024), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383155720>; G. A. Morgan and R. J. Harmon, "Data

analysis, triangulation across multiple data sources, and narrative analysis of individual testimonies.²⁴ This multi-layered approach allows for both interpretive depth and methodological rigor, ensuring that findings are anchored in the lived experience of informants rather than imposed from without.²⁵

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the scholarly understanding of diaspora religiosity in Southeast Asia, while offering practical recommendations for those—whether governmental, civil society, or religious—engaged in strengthening moderate Islamic values within the multicultural fabric of migrant life.

Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil: Context and History

Indonesia's migrant workers are drawn abroad by a persistent asymmetry between the scarcity of employment opportunities at home and the abundance of labor demand in receiving countries. According to data from the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI), approximately 21,358 workers departed under official tracking arrangements in 2019 alone, with the majority destined for Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand, and employed across sectors as varied as agriculture, domestic work, construction, and maritime industries.²⁶

Malaysia's appeal as a destination is not merely economic. Its geographical proximity to Indonesia, the relative intelligibility of Bahasa Melayu to Indonesian speakers, and the cultural familiarity it affords—particularly in contrast to destinations such as the Gulf states or Europe—all combine to make it an accessible and psychologically manageable choice for prospective migrants.²⁷ As one interview participant observed, Malaysian employment is also distinguished by its comparative accessibility: it demands fewer formal documents and imposes fewer bureaucratic obstacles than most alternative destinations, a feature that has made it attractive even to undocumented workers.

Against this backdrop, the Indonesian Muslim community in Malaysia has cultivated a remarkably vibrant religious life. Religious assemblies, recitations, and *salawat* gatherings draw thousands of worshippers to open fields, mosques, and residential spaces. It is within this environment that Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil came into being.

Collection Techniques," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 40, no. 8 (2001): 973–976.

²⁴ G. Daruhadi and P. Sopiati, "Pengumpulan Data Penelitian," *J-CEKI: Jurnal Cendekia Ilmiah* 3, no. 5 (2024): 5423–5443; H. Heriyanto, "Thematic Analysis sebagai Metode Menganalisa Data untuk Penelitian Kualitatif," *Anuva* 2, no. 3 (2018): 317–324; W. N. Nurfajriani et al., "Triangulasi Data dalam Analisis Data Kualitatif," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 10, no. 17 (2024): 826–833.

²⁵ J. Schreiber and K. Asner-Self, *Educational Research: The Interrelationship of Questions, Sampling, Design, and Analysis* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2011).

²⁶ L. R. Gay et al., *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2012).

²⁷ N. Syamsiah, "Permasalahan Pekerja Migran Indonesia pada Kawasan Perbatasan Indonesia-Malaysia di Kabupaten Sambas Kalimantan Barat," *Cross-Border* 3, no. 2 (2020): 84–95.

The surau was founded in Pandan Indah, Kuala Lumpur, by a small group of individuals—H. Muzammil Muhdhor, Habib Hosnol Yaqin bin Yahya, Johan Wahyudi, H. Mahmud Arifin, Mohammad Irsyad, and Mayuri Ahmad—who were moved to act by a particular pastoral concern: during Maghrib prayer times, they observed numerous children wandering the neighborhood who were unable to read the Quran. Convening at H. Muzammil's residence on 25 April 2020, they resolved to rent a space that would serve as a center for religious outreach. The surau formally opened its doors on 1 June 2020.

Its establishment coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant restrictions on congregational worship imposed across Malaysia. In those early months, approximately eleven adults—all around the age of forty—enrolled to learn Quranic recitation. Within three months, their literacy had progressed sufficiently that the adult program gave way to an expanding children's cohort. Today, the surau occupies three connected apartment units and serves 127 students, the majority of whom are children. Its student body includes Indonesian nationals alongside citizens of Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Regular programs include the Quran Learning Assembly (MPQ), Al-Miftah lil Ulum instruction in Arabic script literacy, the Teaching Assembly, the Rotib wal Maulid Assembly, and the Jam'iyah Sholawat Hubbul Asyqin.

Moderate Islam in Practice: Four Indicators

National Commitment

Despite the geographic remoteness of migration, the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil maintains a palpable and demonstrative attachment to Indonesia as homeland. This attachment finds expression in a range of practices: the enthusiastic support of Indonesian national sports teams in contests against Malaysia; a deliberate preference for Indonesian domestic products such as batik, sarongs, and Indonesian culinary specialties; and sustained engagement with news and affairs from home. The congregation continues to observe Indonesian Independence Day with evident pride and communal fervor.

These practices are not mere sentiment. Within the framework of religious moderation, national commitment signifies the maintenance of a coherent loyalty to one's country of origin without allowing that loyalty to harden into divisive or disruptive forms of nationalism in the country of residence. The congregation of the surau exemplifies this balance: their love of Indonesia does not alienate them from Malaysian society but rather enriches their presence within it by modeling a form of patriotism that is grounded, inclusive, and consistent with Islamic teaching. As scholars of Islamic social ethics have noted, the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman*—love of the homeland as an expression of faith—has long provided an Islamic rationale for national sentiment that complements rather than contradicts the universalism of the religion.²⁸

²⁸ M. Aulia and N. Azizah, "Strategi KBRI Kuala Lumpur dalam Perlindungan Kewarganegaraan: Studi WNI Tidak Berdokumen di Malaysia Tahun 2022–2023," *Ganaya: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 7, no. 1 (2024): 108–121.

Tolerance

Malaysia's multi-ethnic, multireligious social fabric presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Indonesian diaspora communities. Research has consistently shown that close and sustained interaction with people of diverse backgrounds tends to foster more tolerant attitudes, and the experience of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil congregation conforms to this pattern.²⁹ Members of the congregation describe respectful and harmonious relations with neighbors and colleagues of different ethnicities and faiths. Religious celebrations within the surau proceed without interference or hostility from surrounding communities, and the institutional culture of the surau actively cultivates an ethic of mutual respect.

Tolerance, as a constitutive element of religious moderation, is not reducible to mere indifference toward difference. It demands the positive capacity to honor the beliefs, traditions, and religious expressions of others while retaining the integrity of one's own convictions. Scholars working on pluralism and peacebuilding have characterized tolerance as the foremost bulwark against the encroachments of extremism—the indispensable foundation upon which peaceful coexistence among different religious communities must be built.³⁰ The surau congregation's tolerance, in this sense, is not passive but active, not reluctant but principled.

Anti-Violence

The anti-violence orientation of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil congregation is most vividly on display in the pedagogical culture of its educational activities. The teachers—themselves Indonesian migrants and alumni of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Islamic Boarding School in Bangkalan—conduct Quranic instruction and afternoon religious classes with a striking combination of disciplined commitment and affectionate gentleness. Observation of these sessions revealed no instance of physical or verbal coercion; teachers were seen assisting young students in arranging their prayer shawls with evident care, interspersing instruction with lighthearted interaction, and responding to error with patience rather than reprimand.

This approach reflects an understanding of anti-violence that reaches beyond the rejection of physical force to encompass the manner in which religious knowledge is communicated. Islamic pedagogy at its most authentic, as the tradition itself affirms, is an act of mercy—an extension of the Prophet's character as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. The concept of *sulh* (reconciliation and peace), which Islam prioritizes over confrontation in matters of interpersonal and communal conflict, finds a quiet but powerful embodiment in this classroom culture.³¹ The surau's practice thus demonstrates that religious moderation is not only an institutional

²⁹ T. Rizkiyah and N. Istiani, "Nilai Pendidikan Sosial Keberagamaan Islam dalam Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia," *POROS ONIM: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan* 2, no. 2 (2021): 86–96.

³⁰ M. Saifuddin Al-Huda, "Pendidikan Islam: Membina Perdamaian dan Toleransi dalam Masyarakat Multikultural di Malaysia dan Indonesia," *Jurnal IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 67–90.

³¹ M. A. A. H. Al. Bayati, *Tolerance, Religious Freedom and Ways to Combat Violent Extremism* (2023), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369119576>.

posture but a disciplined habit of the heart, cultivated daily in the small acts of teaching and care.³²

Adaptability to Local Culture

The fourth indicator of religious moderation concerns the community's capacity to engage meaningfully with the cultural contexts in which it finds itself, both the traditions carried from Indonesia and those encountered in Malaysia. Among the congregation's Madurese members, for instance, the tradition of *ter-ater*—the exchange of spicy porridge during the month of Muharram and sweet porridge during Safar—continues to be observed within the community, preserving a cultural identity rooted in the rhythms of the Islamic calendar as practiced in East Java. The commemoration of Maulid Nabi proceeds in forms closely aligned with Indonesian custom, reinforcing the congregation's sense of continuity with their place of origin.

At the same time, the congregation participates in broader Malaysian customs, including local food-distribution traditions associated with religious events. This dual engagement—honoring the cultural legacy of Indonesia while participating respectfully in Malaysian communal life—exemplifies the kind of contextual and flexible religiosity that scholars have identified as a hallmark of moderate Islam. Islamic practices that accommodate local culture, far from compromising the integrity of the faith, reinforce religious values by demonstrating that Islam is neither rigid nor exclusive but capable of enriching and being enriched by the full diversity of human life.³³ As the tradition of *ter-ater* illustrates, the acculturation of Islamic practice and local custom need not involve compromise of doctrinal essentials; it may instead represent the creative faithfulness of a living tradition.

Conclusion

This study has examined the implementation of moderate Islam among the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil in Kuala Lumpur, a religious community whose membership is drawn predominantly from Indonesian migrant workers. Through qualitative fieldwork encompassing interviews, participatory observation, and documentary analysis, it has been possible to demonstrate that the congregation embodies all four indicators of religious moderation as defined by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs: national commitment, tolerance, an anti-violent orientation, and adaptability to local culture.

These findings carry both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, they contribute to a body of scholarship on diaspora religiosity that has tended to emphasize either the fragility of religious identity under conditions of migration or the rigidification of that identity in response to displacement. The surau congregation suggests a third possibility: that migration, when mediated by strong communal

³² N. U. Islam, "Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: A Perspective Building," *Indonesian Journal of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (IJIIS)* 6, no. 2 (2024).

³³ P. Prakosa, "Moderasi Beragama: Praksis Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama," *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)* 4, no. 1 (2022): 45–55.

institutions and a tradition of moderate religious formation, may actually deepen and render more reflective the practice of moderate Islamic values. The congregation's patriotism is not provincial; their tolerance is not superficial; their rejection of violence is not passive; and their engagement with local culture is not assimilatory. Each of these postures reflects a considered and principled relationship to the world—one that is, in the deepest sense, moderate.

Practically, the study suggests that surau and mosque communities within the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia warrant greater attention from policymakers and civil society organizations concerned with the promotion of religious harmony. The Syaichona Moh. Cholil surau offers a model of institutional design that merits replication: a community space that integrates religious education, cultural transmission, and inter-ethnic engagement in ways that reinforce rather than undermine the values of moderation. Future research might examine whether similar patterns obtain in other diaspora religious communities, and what institutional conditions — leadership, pedagogy, community size, relationship to local authorities — most effectively support the flourishing of moderate Islam beyond the borders of Indonesia.

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