

# DIALOG OF INTERFAITH AND INTERBELIEF COMMUNITIES OF PANTURA (TALI AKRAP): AN OVERVIEW FROM THE STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL THEORY

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## ABSTRACT

*Interfaith dialog is commonly carried out to harmonize the relationship and minimize conflicts between religious believers. This study examines how the functional structure of an interfaith community and beliefs can create harmonious interfaith relationship through an interfaith dialog held in Kudus, Central Java. This study is designed with qualitative research model by applying the phenomenological approach. The data were technically collected through interviews, observation, document studies and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Theoretically, this study used Talcott Parsons' structural functional theory. The results showed that the Interfaith and Interbelief Communities of Pantura (TALI AKRAP) is a system in society where the religious adherents and the flow of beliefs are the integrated elements, each of which should function one another in creating a balance in society. As a system, TALI AKRAP holds four imperative functions which are simultaneously integrated in action systems, namely adaptation, goal attention, integration and learn pattern maintenance or commonly abbreviated AGIL. The existence of adaptation between religious adherents in the community aims to understand, recognize and accept one another as an effort to realize the harmony among religious believers. The goal to be achieved is a community with concern, tolerance, lives side by side and accepts differences as a gift from the God Almighty, all of which are integrated in social dialog activities between religious believers which exist for a long time and are carried out continuously.*

**Keywords:** *Dialog, TALI AKRAP, structural functional*

## INTRODUCTION

A dialog or communication in society is functionally intended to harmonize different thoughts. These different thoughts are the result of various diverse community backgrounds, where the differences include the diversity of ethnicities, races, cultures, and even religions. A dialog or communication takes place based on everyone's awareness in society who wants a comfortable, peaceful and harmonious life. The ideal life where any society wishes to have is that the life free of conflicts among the members, especially the conflict between religious believers.

A conflict that occurs between religious believers, especially in Indonesia, remains problematic. This is because there is a gap in religion-based society who identifies themselves being recognized, legitimated and guaranteed by state law as an official religion and there are also streams of belief whose existence has not yet been recognized by the surrounding community. This leads the illegitimate society to seek their rights for recognition of their existence both in terms of law and government as well as in community life which quite possibly triggers to social jealousy or inequality. In addition, the diversity of religion-based communities will also lead to both religious

majorities and minorities within an area, such as in Bali where Hindus take the majority and Muslims are the other way around, on the contrary in Aceh where Islam takes the majority and other religions are the minorities. When a majority dominates absolutely or when a minority feels that they are not entitled to what they are supposed to get, then this is where the conflict between religious believers begins. Not to mention, certain personal reasons and interests have been the driving reason to the existing division within community. In line with the opinion of Moh. Rosyid (2015: 370) in his research entitled *Realizing an education of inter-religious tolerance in Kudus Regency* stated that the occurrence of internal and inter-religious conflict in Indonesia was caused among others by the narrow understanding of some religious communities towards their religion and religion. other people. This was also found in a study conducted by Rusnaini (2013: 82) entitled *Socio-Cultural Development and Socio-Political Intervention Approaches to Overcome Social Conflicts as an Effort to Strengthen Regional Resilience in Surakarta* which found a phenomenon that occurred in the Pasar Kliwon area to Gandekan that conflicts that occur between people are brought up to religious turmoil and the desire of some groups to show their existence and identity. To keep the society peaceful and harmonious, the developing diversity of religions within this society requires something that enhances the relations among the citizens to create stability and harmony of life.

Speaking of religious phenomena, it is not a simple problem. It concerns multiracial issue, the idea of religion as a system which in essence can be simplified into several components, among others: (1) religious emotions, (2) belief systems, (3) the system of rites and ceremonies, (4) ritual and ceremonial equipment, and (5) religious people (Daeng, 2000: 310). With The existence of a religion that is believed by the community and the position of the community as a social creature, they will surely need others in various matters and various problems of life; therefore, society is called a social system. It is a system because the people are interconnected in addition, they are in a relationship each other and the dialog is one

effective way to facilitate the relations within a system. When a system is not maintained, it leads to be damaged. If this continues, it will damage all elements in the system.

Like a system that continues to work, a community also continues to run in establishing relationships among individuals in it. The individuals referred to in this case are the communities with various religious backgrounds as elements in the system. People with various religious backgrounds are prone to break up, which can disturb other elements in a system. Thus, in keeping each element working properly, maintaining the synergy one another in running social life in the community requires a way to protect it, one of which is through holding dialogs between religious believers. Having observed various cases of religious interfaith occurred in many communities, such as those in Poso between 1998 and 2001, where a lot of people lost their lives due to ethnic and religious issues, the conflict engaged the Muslim and Christian religious communities. The desire of certain regions establishing their own country driven by religion is also an example of a triggering tension between religious communities and even the government. In the one hand, the recent blasphemy case has also been a real example that the religion-based conflict becomes a serious problem in a society with diverse backgrounds and this also shows the need for change on regulations and immediate actions to be taken in maintaining tolerance and harmony between groups of community.

Despite the fact the religious diversity has been officially guaranteed, it is upheld and even protected by the 1945 Constitution, article 29 paragraph (2) that "the State guarantees the independence of each population to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their religions and beliefs." However, the problems between religious believers frequently occur as if it is an unbroken chain. The efforts are needed to overcome these problems. The conflict between religious believers can at least be undertaken individually or in groups. The groups which were established within a community forum

share a common purpose to do and are addressed to the wider community. The community can play an active role in helping to solve problems in the community because the community is directly involved in dealing with the problem where sometimes the main source of the problem is the individual or his/her own group. This statement is in line with what was expressed by Rozak (2008: 24) that “in overcoming group conflicts, including religious conflicts, do not just rely on the government, but the community also needs improve and intensify communication between the existing religious communities by developing openness, democratic attitudes, tolerance and peacefulness”. Accordingly, the community has an important role in reducing interfaith problems which frequently occur, especially if the community is made of an interfaith background. Through an interfaith community, it helps communities to establish a conducive harmonious atmosphere of life within the communities in addition to be able to reduce problems through establishing a communication or dialog between religious believers. One of the interfaith communities in Kudus, Central Java is Interfaith and Interbelief Communities of Pantura (TALI AKRAP), which altogether embraces various members and leaders of religions as well as the streams of belief to create harmony in society through the interfaith dialog. Dialogue is conducted with interfaith discussions to get mutual understanding between religious believers. Based on the elaborated background of problems, this study examines the interfaith dialog activity held by TALI AKRAP in partly establishing harmonious and religious communities in Kudus regency from the structural functional theory.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In conducting the study, the use of certain methods affects the analysis and research results. By using the right methods, the results and analysis of the study will also be accurate. In this study, the data were collected by conducting a direct research to the study location and subject,

namely TALI AKRAP, supported by relevant literature studies. This study is, therefore, a typical qualitative research with phenomenological approach which applied purposive-sampling method to obtain the data. According to Bungin (2011: 79), a qualitative study is a study that collects the data using the observational methods sourced from qualitative traditions such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation, or involving several important people for focus group discussion. Furthermore, Herdiansyah (2012: 116) emphasizes that in a qualitative study, there are also several data collection methods commonly used including interviews, observations, documentation studies and focus group discussions. Meanwhile, the phenomenology approach, according to Herdiansyah (2012: 66), is one of the qualitative study models developed by European scientist Edmund Husserl in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (around 1935's) related to a phenomenon. According to Husserl, in every case, humans share an understanding and appreciation of each phenomenon that they experience and are quite influential in their future attitudes.

Furthermore, Herdiansyah adds the phenomenological approach attempts to uncover, study and understand a phenomenon and its unique context experienced by individuals to the level of “belief” of the individual concerned. Thus, learning and understanding should ideally be based on the perspective of paradigms and direct beliefs of the individual concerned as the subject who undergoes the first-hand experiences. In other words, a phenomenological study seeks to search for the psychological meaning of an individual's experience of a phenomenon through an in-depth study in the context of subject's daily life. In fact, in understanding and studying a problem, the researcher needs to prepare well and comprehensively to gain full trust from the subject under study. Thus, the closeness supports the course of this study. The application of purposive sampling method refers to the opinion of Sugiyono (2009: 85) that purposive sampling is a sampling technique with typical specific considerations, i.e., when a researcher conducted

the study on food quality, the data source is a food expert. In a qualitative study, the sampling is commonly done purposively. This is so because the researcher chooses both the research subject and location which aims to study or to understand the main problem being investigated. The chosen subjects and locations are normally customized to the research objectives. Simply, this study applied a qualitative research model in addition to the phenomenological approach. This is why this study intends to see the extent to which the interfaith dialog is carried out by TALI AKRAP, which consists of various interfaith members which enable the interfaith tolerance established in the Kudus District of Central Java, using the perspective of functional structural theory, bearing in mind that the community is part of the society which is referred to as a social system. Furthermore, in sampling, the researchers chose purposive sampling method with certain considerations, namely interfaith and religious leaders who were members of TALI AKRAP which were considered to be able to represent elements of a social system in society, namely individuals with different religious backgrounds.

This study applied a qualitative method, which refers to Herdiansyah's opinion, by carrying out interview, observation, documentation studies in addition to participating in focus group discussion (FGD) activities. In the interview segment, data collection was done by interviewing interfaith leaders of the members of TALI AKRAP which consisted of representatives of Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Catholic, Confucian, Kong Hu Cu, Baha'i and *Sedulur Sikep* faith group or better known by the *Samin* tribe. For observation activities, the researchers conducted field observations to TALI AKRAP's activities. Meanwhile, the documentation is technically an activity that a researcher does to retrieve data during the activities carried out by the community, in addition to support documentation from various relevant sources. The most different thing from other community activities in general is focus group discussion (FGD). Herdiansyah (2012: 146) explains that

Focus Group Discussion is basically an interview conducted in groups. Because of the researchers' interest to gather information from a variety of different perspectives, a typical interview is conducted simultaneously within one time and one place, which is then known as a focus group discussion (FGD). The aim of conducting FGD is generally to hold a sharing discussion and dialog of face to face with fellow respondents/subjects/research informants to produce information directly from various points of view.

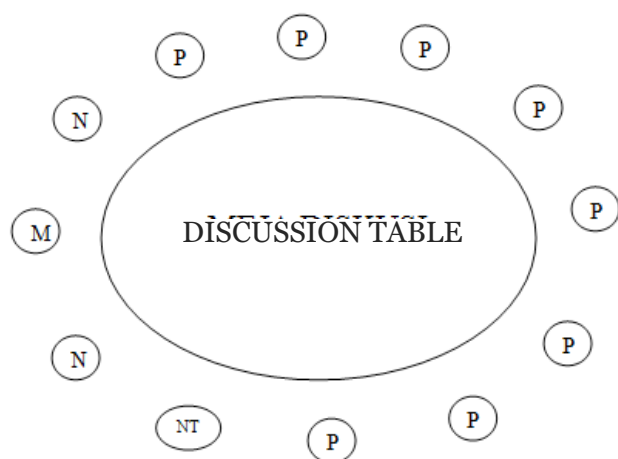
Furthermore, regarding focus group discussions (FGD), Bungin (2011: 233) adds that in it, the researchers engage various parties who are considered capable of contributing ideas to the issues being discussed. Bearing in mind capacity is the very consideration for the discussion quality, the researchers should consider who is involved in the FGD, who is the resource person. The considerations in determining the subjects being involved in the FGD are related to several things: (a) a person's expertise on the case being discussed, (b) practical experience and concern for focus of the problem, (c) "personally involved" in focus of the problem, (d) authority figures in the case under discussion, and (e) ordinary people who do not know anything about the problem but share the real problem.

In this study, the FGD held by the TALI AKRAP community involves all interfaith leaders as the members of the community represented by interfaith community leaders, religious leaders of various religions, faith activists, expert lecturers in the related fields, government/related agencies as well as the outside community in the activities of the religious dialog. The data validity test in this study used the data source triangulation technique. According to Moleong (2006: 330), this technique compares and checks both the degree of trust in information obtained through time and different ways in qualitative methods primarily carried out through; (1) comparing observational data with interview results; (2) comparing what people say in public with what

is said privately; (3) comparing what people say about the research situation with what is said all the time; (4) comparing one's circumstances and perspectives with various opinions and views of others such as ordinary people, people with secondary or higher education, rich people and people in government, and (5) comparing the results of interviews with issues related to a document. Thus, the results are expected to be able to meet similarities or reasons behind the differences. Furthermore, the data analysis in this study uses Milles and Huberman's technique in which the interactive model of data analysis techniques consists of four stages, namely: (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) data presentation, and (d) drawing conclusion.

**Figure 1**

Forum of the Discussion Group Model



Remark:  
 M : Moderator  
 NT : Notetaker  
 N : Interviewee

Source: Discussion Situation for FGD Implementation According to Bungin, 2011

The discussion in this study is also reviewed in terms of a functional structural theory which has the assumption that society is a system that consists of parts that are interconnected with one another so that other parts cannot function without a relationship with the other parts. An interfaith community consisting of various religions and creeds should have a continuous

dialogue because members of various religions and creeds are part of the community. This theory includes four imperative functions, namely adaptation, goal attainment, integration and learn pattern or commonly abbreviated as AGIL.

This study focuses on TALI AKRAP in Kudus Regency with the following considerations: 1) Kudus is one of the regions in Java that has a wide variety of religions and beliefs, where the number of members of faith believers is greater than the number of Hindus and Kong Hu Cu; 2) Interfaith problems frequently occur in the community and the gap between parties who previously had a conflict remains unresolved even though the problems have been peacefully resolved both by the government and by local residents; and 3) TALI AKRAP is an interfaith and interbelief community consisting of various religions and beliefs, where previously the streams of belief were not incorporated in interfaith communities established by the government such as FKUB (Religious Harmony Forum), which is why TALI AKRAP as a unifying forum for the diverse religious believers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### General Overview of TALI AKRAP

Society can be defined as several people in the broadest sense and bound by a culture that they think similar. Society can also be defined to cover all human activities in a shared life (Sigalingging, 2008: 28). The community in each region consists of diverse characteristics, cultures, religions and beliefs. The diversity of religions and beliefs in this society has been guaranteed and their existence are protected by law as stipulated in article 29 paragraph (2), "the State guarantees the independence of each population to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their religion and beliefs."

In such diverse societies, there are usually groups of people or simply called community. Community is a social group of various

environmental organisms that generally share the same interests, habits, goals, and targets. The community usually moves and performs its role not only for the group itself, but also for other communities in a broad and overall entity. In addition, a community is usually oriented to achieve a goal based on certain backgrounds or problems which might be impossible to be solved individually or personally like one of the interfaith and interbelief communities in Kudus Regency, TALI AKRAP.

TALI AKRAP stands for Interfaith and Interbelief Communities of Pantura, one of the communities engaged in interfaith and interbelief whose territory includes regencies/cities in the north coastal region which includes Kudus, Pati, Jepara, Demak, Rembang and Blora. The Secretariat of TALI AKRAP itself is in Kudus Regency because Kudus is the place where the community was founded and most of its members come from this region. Kudus Regency is additionally a regency that can represent the existence of people who embrace six religions in Indonesia as well as several streams of belief, where each representative of religious leaders joins in the TALI AKRAP, whereas for other regencies/cities there are only a few representatives of interfaith leaders.

TALI AKRAP is a community that was founded in 2013 and has been incorporated under the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights No. AHU-0013488.AH.01.07 of 2015, KESBANGPOL Kudus No. 220/561/20/2016. Thus, this community has been recognized by the government in addition to be acknowledged legally. TALI AKRAP was founded as a forum for communication between religious and stream-of-belief believers to the wider community where its existence is parallel to the religious group that has been created by the government, FKUB (Religious Harmony Forum). TALI AKRAP is intended not to rival or compete with FKUB, but as a refinement of the community organizations because in FKUB the religions involved are only those which have been officially recognized by the government and the community while other

streams of belief or new religions such as the Baha'i religion do not get space in FKUB. They are included in cultural groups in the Regency Tourism and Culture Office. The case may not solely be whether TALI AKRAP is included in FKUB. For new religions like the Baha'i religion, they might not be incorporated into a regency scale interfaith platform, given that not every regency/ city area has an interfaith community forum. Thus, the existence of TALI AKRAP, which constitutes not only interfaith but also inter-regions, is welcomed with great enthusiasm by interfaith leaders who are open to other religions. TALI AKRAP established by the community constitutes of various representatives of religious figures and religious beliefs. They move on concerns about the lack of tolerance between religious communities, especially, because there is more or less a difference in the treatment of religious people under government-made communities compared to naturally made ones. In practice, TALI AKRAP moves through communal activities or interfaith dialogs in achieving the community's-oriented goals by embracing various religions and streams of belief. To distinguish between people's communities and government-made communities, in more detail the following table will illustrate the differences between FKUB and TALI AKRAP;

**Table 1.** Comparison between FKUB and TALI AKRAP

INDICATORS	FKUB	TALI AKRAP
Source of Establishment	Established directly and deliberately by the regency/city government	Established by the community without any relationship with the ruling government
Composition of Members	Specific to religions which have been officially recognized by the government	Various religions and even the streams of belief that exist in society

Statutes	Power under the government	No power because everything is run based on the decisions of members
Member Structure	Regulated and formalized by the regency/city government	Based on agreement between community members
Background of Establishment	Established as a complementary religious institution/forum	Interfaith issues and no recognition of streams of belief in FKUB and the government found in Kudus Regency

Source: Researcher's personal interview and documentation

The different characteristics of society and the diversity of religions and the streams of belief may lead to gaps, conflicts in addition to the lack of tolerance between religious believers due to the high level of extreme interpretation of each religion, the unwillingness of religious people to live a harmonious social life with other religious communities, and even to the conflict of interests each individually. In view of this, there needs to be a platform for unifying religious differences which is carried out not only by one religion but all including the streams of belief that exist in society through a communication or dialog between religious believers. Through the interfaith communication or dialog, problems between religious believers and negative views on certain religions or streams of belief can be minimized and tolerance between religious believers can be realized.

One of the efforts to create tolerance among religious believers carried out by TALI AKRAP is to conduct an interfaith dialog which is followed by each representative of religious leaders, streams of belief, and the public and cooperates with the government. TALI AKRAP constitutes of members from various different

religious backgrounds, namely Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Catholicism, Kong Hu Cu, other streams of belief such as *Sedulur Sikep* or often called as *Samin*, in addition to a religion which might not be as popular to the public, the Baha'i religion whose existence has actually been recognized by the government in 2014 with the Number SJ/B.VII/1/HM.00/675/2014. However, not many people know or even recognize them as an independent religion. In addition to having different religious background, the TALI AKRAP members also have different educational and professional backgrounds, which have led them to have different ways of thinking and responding to the interfaith dialog and religious tolerance. However, basically, religious leaders and members of TALI AKRAP share a similar aim which is to create tolerance among religious believers in addition to place a harmonious climate, all of which is done, one of them, with interfaith dialog activities.

The interfaith dialog activities are carried out and realized in various forms of activities and in turn in one house of TALI AKRAP members within the local religious building and cultural center. The dialog is carried out by presenting all religious figures and is open to anyone who wants to participate. The interfaith dialog is not scheduled specifically and periodically but is adjusted to the conditions of the respective members. The study conducted at TALI AKRAP of Kudus Regency took 9 informants from all TALI AKRAP members who were from different religious and belief backgrounds. The 9 informants of religious figures were taken because they sufficiently represent various backgrounds of religions and streams of belief; they were the TALI AKRAP members from around Pantura regional areas. These interfaith leaders conducted religious dialog activities with the aim of realizing tolerance among religious believers in society. This is done mainly due to the lack of attitude and tolerance of the community that are currently felt by the members of TALI AKRAP. They even tend not to care about people of different religions and beliefs. Another reason is TALI AKRAP is a

system social movement in the community that serves to move every element of society consisting of various religions and streams of belief through various ways in order to be able to adapt to each other, understand and finally accept any existing differences instead of making a gap among those communities.

## **Dialog as communication between groups**

A Dialog is carried out to harmonize various ideas, views, and differences in society such as regarding concepts, culture, and religious teachings. However, in matters of religion, a dialog is not intended to determine what is right and wrong, but to look for the deepest meaning and experience for spirituality.

A dialog between religious believers is interpreted as a social communication within the community. Not only is it a social communication, but more broadly a dialog is also interpreted as an intercultural communication. Liliweri (2007: 19) states that one perspective of an intercultural communication is to emphasize its purpose to reduce uncertainty about other people. Therefore, the interfaith dialog is needed to find shared understanding that sometimes becomes a problem in society because of the unwillingness of the community or groups to understand each other.

Furthermore, Liliweri (2011a: 257) also states that a dialog as an interfaith relation and communication can be viewed from two dimensions, namely (1) a shared understanding between all parties that relate and communicate about the themes of the universal and internal duties and functions of religion and (2) the appearance or attraction of values and norms and teachings of religions that can be seen through the behaviors of their adherents.

Group communication means a communication that takes place between a communicator and a group of more than two people. A group of people who become communicants can be small (small-group communication) and large (large-group communication). A small

group communication can be done in the form of discussions, seminars, and meetings. It can be carried out in a dialogical and circular manner. By allowing the communicants to give feedback, they can respond to what the communicator explains, ask questions if they do not understand and refute if not agree. Then, for the large-group communication, it can take the form of a large meeting or a campaign, which runs linearly. Whether there is a dialog or a Q&A in speech is what distinguishes between a large group and a small one (Anshorie, 2015: 364).

Schramm in Liliweri (2011b: 171) also states that the effectiveness of a communication, among others, depends on the situation and social relations between the communicator and the communicant, especially in the scope of reference (framework of reference) and the breadth of experience they have. The very effective intercultural communication must consider four conditions, namely: (1) respect for other cultural members as humans; (2) respect for other cultures as they are and not as we wish; (3) respect for the rights of other cultural members to act differently from the way we do; and (4) competent cross-cultural communicators must learn to enjoy life with people from other cultures. In line with this, Barlund in Liliweri (2011b: 171) also suggests the effectiveness of a communication depends on mutual understanding between individuals as a function of a shared perception orientation, belief system and communication style.

In line with the opinion above, according to Tutiasri (2016: 88), the factor influencing the effectiveness of a communication between groups is the personal factor, namely group members have a very big role in contributing to give an input to solve a problem. The advantages of forming an effective group are:

- a. Exchanging information among members to achieve common goals
- b. Increasing knowledge to solve problems that have never been faced
3. Making each group member more alert in solving problems faced



- d. Developing the mental of every individual to dare to express his/her opinion in groups
- e. Increasing everyone's awareness to stay united when facing a problem

Developing an effective group makes the group members capable of arguing with each other and expressing opinions about solving a problem. Thus, they can determine the decision appropriately and solve the problems being faced by the group. A dialog or communication between people, including intercultural and interfaith communications, has a specific purpose of creating a more effective communication. A religious dialog is needed to provide understanding to the wider community and people who do not understand or argue about the culture, customs, beliefs, and religious teachings or the believers spread within the community. People view religion as more systematic because it has clear, universal prophets, books and teachings than the belief system that is more on the subjectivity of certain individuals or groups. They think that if there are certain teachings in the same religion following different streams or sects, the teachings of other sects are considered a heresy (something that is not done according to the example). Thus, a religious dialog or a group communication needs to be conducted to provide an understanding that both religion and belief have their own teaching systems. People and the community as a social system must not assert their own wills and beliefs, so the acceptance of other individuals or groups against those of different religions can realize mutual understanding. Thus, it is one effort to realize tolerance among religious believers.

### **Dialog of Interfaith Communities**

Ismail (2014: 111) states that the dialog between religious leaders, political elites and the press is to establish a shared understanding of how to empower politics properly so as not to occur political radicalism that can disrupt religious harmony and harm the interests of the nation. In the process of understanding other groups or interfaith groups, the interfaith and religious

communities must engage in the interfaith dialog. Furthermore, according to Hans Kung in Ismail (2014: 136), "there is no peace between nations without an interfaith dialog. There will be no peace between religions without an interfaith dialog, nor is there an interfaith dialog without investment in the basis (foundation) of religions. He further explains that not only is a dialog important, but it is also felt as a shared need in interfaith relations. Without a dialog, religious believers will find it difficult to understand the teachings, history, development, religious phenomena, and traditions of other religious communities. In other words, a dialog is one of the effective and productive ways to achieve mutual understanding and harmony between religions.

An interfaith dialog is aimed at reducing friction, erroneous stigma in society, and most importantly, realizing tolerance among religious believers so that community harmony will be realized. The TALI AKRAP community conducts dialog activities beginning with the approach of every religious representative in the Pantura area. This community conducts rotational dialog activities from each religious representative and dialogs with discussion of problems that occur in society or about the introduction and understanding of the teachings of a religion as insights for each religious community. The interfaith dialog is very important, through which a mutual understanding can be built. The reasons for conducting an interfaith dialog are stated by Mukti Ali in Khotimah (2011: 221) that:

1. Religious pluralism in the world is a reality that is increasingly clearer because it is increasingly easy to communicate, so communication between groups and even among religious believers must be maintained.
2. The desire to make a relationship between one another increases. Isolationism is impossible to do and must be left behind. Moreover, aspects of equality between human groups and religions with one another are increasingly recognized and felt rather than something that can separate them.

3. An interfaith dialog helps each participant to grow in his/her own belief when he/she meets people of different religions and exchange ideas about their various beliefs and practices.
4. In addition to positive values of the dialog for individuals, they can also enrich their insights of each other's religion. For example, in the dialog between religious believers, Islam can contribute to other religions to increase inspiration and universality.
5. An interfaith dialog can help to increase cooperation among the citizens of a country. Thus, with mutual respect, justice, peace and friendly cooperation, everyone can develop the country.

Religious issues that often occur in Indonesia in recent years have been a whip that tolerance between religious believers has not yet been successfully implemented interfaith harmony has not been fully carried out and harmony has not been created fully in the life of a pluralistic Indonesian society. Like what happened in Kudus Regency, Central Java, which experienced interfaith conflicts in recent years, ranging from the prohibition of the establishment of worship places to the separation of graves based on the interests of individuals or certain people. This is reinforced by the data summarized by Rosyid (2013: 53) in his research on interfaith conflicts in Kudus Regency. There was a demonstration in Getas Pejaten Village because a shop located in the IPIEMS building on Agus Salim street was used as a place of worship (Church). Another conflict was the use of the Sukarjo's as a Church in Conge, Ngembalrejo Village, Bae. The other conflict is the Dzirkussholikhin believers, led by Nur Rokhim in Golantepus Village, claimed to have met and received revelations from a light considered to be an angel.

The population of Kudus Regency have quite diverse religions and ethnics. Therefore, to prevent conflicts, they need maintain religious harmony especially if there have been conflicts between religious believers in the region. The

role of interfaith communities, in this case, is very important. In accordance with its mission of creating harmony among religious believers, Interfaith and Interbelief Communities of Pantura (TALI AKRAP) jointly conducts interfaith dialog activities with various religions and streams of belief to minimize existing conflicts. Interfaith dialog activities carried out since 2014 continue to invite people of different religions to know their environment better, look after each other and create harmony in the life of society, nation and state. Through interfaith dialogue, the community communicates more effectively, in line with what was revealed by Bazezew and Mulugeta (2017: 28) that effective communication between individuals can prevent and resolve conflicts in friendly and informal ways. So that interfaith dialogue can be used as an effort to create harmony between religious communities.

Dialog activities carried out by TALI AKRAP take the form of group discussions by discussing current problems that are developing and crucial to solve and prevention. The activities also contain an understanding of an issue that is felt important to the public. Dialog activities are carried out not only between public figures and community members, but also in collaboration with government institutions such as Kudus Narcotics Police Unit when there is drug abuse issue, with Kudus Tax Office when the government is actively promoting tax amnesty, and with the KPU (General Election Commission) for the socialization of regional head elections for new voters. This is because the members of TALI AKRAP are not only adults or elderly people but also children and adolescents. In terms of membership, there is no age limit for participating in the TALI AKRAP dialog activities. Anyone can join.

In the dialog activities, in addition to discussing special themes or certain problems, they also discuss about theology or understanding of a religious teaching. It has the purpose of providing insight and correcting stigma in the community. However, the discussion about the creed of a religion should not be debated, denied

or not contain propaganda in the teachings of a religion. Thus, they only talk about the teachings that generally invite the good. If the believers of different religions have shared understanding in thinking, acting or behaving, harmony among religious believers will be created and maintained.

### **Religious Dialog Model Conducted by the Community of Religious Activists (TALI AKRAP) in Kudus Regency**

An interfaith and interbelief community in society that has a specific purpose for society in general and carries out interfaith activities must have a certain model or form in the implementation system, which then becomes its characteristic. The implementation of the chosen activity model is usually adjusted to the conditions and needs. The appropriate activity model can create the effectiveness of the objectives to be achieved.

The activity model that is usually used can also show differences with other similar activities or communities. The initial process of the formation of a community activity model is inseparable from the discussion that is quite important because the running of a community and the activity model starts from the collaboration of several people that have the same thought and purpose, which are realized in the form of activities. The membership and establishment of TALI AKRAP began with the desire to manifestly implement tolerance among religious believers in the community, which then embraced all religious teachings and several streams of belief in the community to get to know each other better and to be able to apply an attitude of tolerance among religious believers in a more real way.

The community, which was formed around 2014 and had been legal in 2015, has been carrying out interfaith dialog activities until now. An interfaith dialog is considered as a quite effective way in giving understanding, knowledge or insight, as well as opportunities for other religious believers to ask, correct and confirm the stigma circulating in a society that is not necessarily

correct and up to now can be a trigger or source of conflicts among religious believers because their understanding and knowledge are not yet right that make them only speculate according to their own point of view. This is in accordance with the meaning of the interfaith dialog as not only a social communication in society, but also an intercultural communication as stated by Liliweri (2007: 19) that one of the perspectives of an intercultural communication emphasizes that the purpose of the intercultural communication is to reduce uncertainty about others. Therefore, a dialog as a communication between religious believers is needed to have shared understanding which is a problem in society because of the unwillingness to understand other groups.

For every religious dialog activity, TALI AKRAP involves all members from various interfaith groups and all active member present in the dialog activity if the dialog schedule does not coincide with a very important religious or personal agenda. Every religious dialog activity carried out by TALI AKRAP has a different impact or impression on each of its members. Extraordinary impression is felt by religious and stream-of-belief groups and religious groups, especially those who have minority members in society such as Hinduism, believers of *Sedulur Sikep* (Samin Tribe) and *Baha'i* Religion who feel their existence is recognized in society.

In carrying out a dialog activity by a community, it is inseparable from the goals that have been set, but sometimes not all community members understand the purpose of the activity they are following. Because TALI AKRAP is formed based on the sense of awareness of its members and the members attend the dialog without any force, every member who participates in the dialog has shared understanding and knows the purpose of the dialog and the formation of TALI AKRAP well. The interfaith dialog is conducted to provide an opportunity for those who are considered minorities in society and to create harmony and tolerance among religious believers. This is in line with the opinion of Liliweri (2011a: 257) that a dialog as interfaith relations and communication

can be viewed from two dimensions, namely (1) a shared understanding between all relevant parties that communicate about the themes of universal and internal tasks and functions of religions and (2) appearance or attraction of values, norms and teachings of religions that can be seen through the behaviors of their adherents.

A religious dialog activity is usually carried out with a model in accordance with the needs, agreements and conditions in the field. TALI AKRAP applies the most comfortable model that is not too formal so people will not feel like attending an official event. The dialog usually takes the form of meetings with discussions about the theology or teachings of each religion delivered to provide insights and knowledge so that other people do not misunderstand and correct wrong thoughts towards other religions that develop in the community. This is in accordance with the dialog model proposed by Ismail (2014: 138) who mentions several models of dialogs, namely parliamentary dialog, institutional dialog, theological dialog, dialog in community, dialog of life and spiritual dialog. However, TALI AKRAP does not apply all the models. It only applies the dialog in community, the dialog of life, and the spiritual dialog. This is because the dialog in community and dialog of life models, in general, aim to resolve practical and actual issues in life that are the shared focus like the relationship between religion and the state regarding religious freedom, religious minority rights such as getting equal opportunities in society and government, as well as problems arising from the marriage of adherents of the streams of belief as experienced by *Sedulur Sikep* believers who go through a long process so that their existence as well as their customary marriage traditions are recognized by the state. They struggle to obtain the same position in terms of religious learning at school. Not only *Samin* tribe, there is also a *Baha'i* religion that is not widely known by the people, so it is often considered a deviant sect. The marriage in their religion are not officially recognized by the state, which has an impact when they have a child

only registered with the name of his/her mother without his/her father's name.

The problems like this are real and experienced directly by the members of TALI AKRAP. TALI and the dialog in the public can provide insight into problem resolution. Through the dialog in the community, its members can also get legal assistance. In addition to being in line with the dialog in community and the dialog of life, the dialog activities carried out by TALI AKRAP are also in accordance with the spiritual dialog because it aims to develop and deepen the spiritual life among various believers of religions. The form of the spiritual dialog through esoteric aspects of a religion or special understanding of certain religious teachings to a group is in accordance with the activities of TALI AKRAP. This has been done several times, such as the introduction of Catholic teachings through the Congregation of Divine Organization (PI) and the correctional dialog activity of people's wrong stigma about LDII teaching by LDII community of Kudus Regency in Panjang Village, Bae District, Kudus.

It turns out that TALI AKRAP is not only a community that always carries out its activities in the form of religious dialogs, but it also makes the community into good citizens, to be aware of the law, be obedient to regulations and care for others. Thus, in addition to religious dialog activities, TALI AKRAP also carries out other communal activities such as social services, counseling and visits in religious holiday celebrations. This is clearly seen in several interfaith meetings held and packaged in a cultural activity and a visit in the celebration of one religious holiday of the members of TALI AKRAP and electoral counseling by inviting KPU of Kudus Regency.

A public community or association must have differences between one and another, both from the structure, membership and form of activities. From all the informants interviewed, all share the same opinion that there are fundamental differences between TALI AKRAP and FKUB as interfaith communities. The leader of the

**Table 2.** Total Population of Kudus Regency in 2016 Based on Religion and Belief

No	Religion	Number of Men	%	Number of Women	%	Total	%
1	Islam	404,699	97.91%	407,625	97.77%	812,324	97.84%
2	Christian	5,662	1.37%	6,246	1.50%	11,908	1.43%
3	Catholic	2,301	0.56%	2,406	0.58%	4,707	0.57%
4	Hinduism	13	0.00%	6	0.00%	19	0.00%
5	Buddhism	486	0.12%	484	0.12%	970	0.12%
6	Kong Hu Cu	2	0.00%	1	0.00%	3	0.00%
7	Streams of Belief	154	0.04%	136	0.03%	290	0.03%
Total		413,317	100%	416,904	100.00%	830,221	100.00%

Source: Central Java Information and Communication Office, 2016

interfaith community TALI AKRAP considers that TALI AKRAP is more able to embrace all religions and run more naturally than FKUB which only embraces official religions recognized by the government alone without involving the followers of the streams of belief in society such as *Sedulur Sikep* (*Samin* tribe). The interview also revealed the significance of the disappointment felt by believers of streams of belief who felt they had not received equal recognition from other religions even though the number of the believers is more than other religions such as Hinduism and Kong Hu Cu in Kudus Regency itself. This statement is reinforced by the Kudus regency population data as follows:

So far, the interfaith dialog has been conducted by TALI AKRAP effectively by the informants in realizing religious tolerance, especially for TALI AKRAP members themselves, the internal religious community members of TALI AKRAP and the people around TALI AKRAP members. However, this is not yet fully effective for regions or those that have personal problems related to the surrounding people especially if they have political interests. However, if viewed from the point of dispute resolution that has been carried out by TALI AKRAP, the purpose of the dialog carried out by the TALI AKRAP is in accordance with the model proposed by Liliweri (2011a: 405)

which divides the types and objectives of the dialog into dispute, inquiry, and negotiations (offer). All the models in question have been carried out by TALI AKRAP, such as the case in Colo village, Dawe Kudus Regency which underwent the conflict between Buddhists and Muslims regarding the funeral dispute and the rejection of the existence of *Baha'i* religion in Pati Regency which was considered a deviant sect in the society because it had different traditions and customs from the general people, given that its teachings in Central Java are only found in Pati Regency. However, after further investigation, the *Baha'i* religion has finally been recognized as an official religion by the state and is not a splinter/part or sect of one of the religions in Indonesia. The other case is a negotiation between Ngembalrejo Bae Kudus villagers and Pastor Setiawan at the establishment of the Bukit Sion church which was finally permitted to operate in carrying out religious activities by considering that it is a hall, not a church. Although they have reconciled, there is still a gap and are felt by those in dispute and daily social interactions as acknowledged by those who experience the dispute.

Based on the conflicts that occurred as described above and in the background, this shows that the level of effectiveness of a dialog and the success of religious tolerance cannot be

**Table 3.** Comparison of Tolerance Indicators among Religious Figures in TALI AKRAP

No	Informant Name	Religion	Tolerance Indicator
1	Thomas	Catholic	Tolerance is when other people can accept the differences of other people in their religion and religious practice, as well as worship. Not asserting one's own will. For me my religion is mine and your religion is yours, that's what Islam says as being tolerant.
2	Hani'ah	Islam	How can we see a tolerant society in our environment? For example, during the commemoration of religious holidays, people can gather and be harmonious like visiting our neighbors when invited to a celebration without suspicion.
3	Widodo	Kong Hu Cu	Tolerant person is good, friendly with others, unselfish, does not feel the most righteous and is willing to accept others who are different from him.
4	Budi Santoso	Sedulur Sikep	A tolerant society can be seen from several things: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Their views on people of different religions are not cynical.</li> <li>2. When there are other people who need help, they, at least, have concern.</li> <li>3. They have mutual respect for other religions and the feelings of people from other religions</li> <li>4. They can maintain security and comfort, not close themselves or cause conflicts between religious believers</li> <li>5. Religious figures in the community give an example to behave tolerance among religious believers as well because they have an important role in carrying in society.</li> </ol>
5	Setiawan	Christian	The indicators of people willing to be tolerant are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They do not talk about other religions too much, we are brothers, we are not talking about even making religion a problem.</li> <li>2. Religion or belief is personal.</li> <li>3. They can get along well with everyone.</li> </ol>
6	Rosyid (Chairman of TALI AKRAP)	Islam	People willing to tolerate are those who: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. do not suspect or have thinking negative of other religious believers by realizing that the religion and belief in our society are different. do not suspect when we want to get along and make friends.</li> <li>2. get along naturally, not by design.</li> </ol>
7	Putu Dantre	Hinduism	We can see a tolerant society from: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Their every day's lives, they do not make people offended and angry.</li> <li>2. They do not trigger a dispute in the society.</li> <li>3. No one feels threatened or suspected until there are complaints from the surrounding community.</li> </ol>
8	Suparno	Buddhism	Tolerance can be seen when the situations in the community are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no conflict and violence that cause the prohibition of activities for religious believers.</li> <li>2. Providing worship place for each different religion. In Kudus, if the permit to build a place of worship has not been met due to the limited number of members, the government can make a religious tourism village like in Boyolali where one complex has various places of worship for various religions so that those who cannot build their place of worship independently can still carry out worship according to their own place of worship.</li> </ol>
9	Sulistiyani	Baha'i	People willing to tolerate can respect me. They admit that I am also part of them. They can accept the existence of Baha'i or accept differences.

Source: Interviews and private documentation of the researcher

generalized for each region because when there are no problems that arise or if the problem has been considered completed, it does not guarantee that there is a tolerance among religious believers. Further, when discussing tolerance in society, the following are the statements of the respective religious leaders in TALI AKRAP regarding the indicators that people are deemed to have tolerance:

The indicators of a tolerant society based on the view of each TALI AKRAP members are indeed different, but in general people that are said to have tolerance are those who want to accept differences in religions, to get along without any suspicion, and to give others opportunities to carry out what they believe. This is consistent with what was stated by Casram (2016: 191) that society is considered to have tolerated if: (a) the community has an inclusive religious attitude, meaning that the religion itself is true but still gives room for other people of different religions to believe in their religious beliefs; (b) there is an attitude of letting and not hurting other people or groups of the same or different religions; (c) the existence of personal security, property, objects and minority elements in society; (d) respect for those who have different religion, morality and institutions, and (e) the freedom to embrace religion and implement teachings of the religion one believes in. Casram's opinion is in line with the tolerance indicators carried out by the community that will strengthen national resilience according to Setiadi and Kolip (2011: 498), namely: (1) the ability of the community to protect its citizens in a pluralistic reality both vertically and horizontally, in which TALI AKRAP conducts social services to poor people of the Chinatown village and develops an attitude of tolerance through interfaith dialog activities to open more insight about other religions and become citizens by maintaining unity and integrity; (2) community participation in organizations through activities that build relationships between citizens that have been carried out by the AKRAP ROPE by collaborating with the government and other institutions to educate the community as citizens,

where the implementation is carried out before the regional head election by collaborating with KPU and collaborating with Kudus Police Unit in dealing with drug abuse. (3) the ability of the community to prevent and manage conflicts by building tolerance with a social system approach, namely through relationships between other groups and not solely on just one group to reduce fears of narrow fanaticism, primordial sentiments with the members of TALI AKRAP who are also members of the other community such as FKUB and the Protection of Women and Children Community; and (4) a dialog between religious elites continues to touch the grassroots level to create a harmonious relationship, which has been carried out by TALI AKRAP by embracing not only the majority of religions in society but also the streams of belief such as *Sedulur Sikep* or *Samin* tribe whose existence in FKUB are actually included as a local culture.

### **Dialog of Interfaith and Interbelief Communities of Pantura (TALI AKRAP) Viewed from Functional Structural Theory**

Society is a social creature, a creature that needs others to survive and run the wheel of life. This shows that the society also serves as a social system that is interdependent with other societies, which is as an element in a system. Thus, the discussion of this interfaith community dialog uses structural functional theory because the community in a society has a lead relationship behind each other, influences each other and implements the social system through the process of adaptation to the maintenance of a continuous pattern. The theory used in the discussion of this research is Talcott Parsons's functional structural theory. Structural functional theory according to Talcott Parsons has the basic assumption that understanding or perspective in sociology sees society as a system consisting of parts that are interconnected with each other, so one part cannot function without the other as applied in the life of society, nation and state. Every citizen who lives in a society is impossible to live without

the help from others because the nature of human is a social creature who needs society to create a harmonious life. Community participation in creating a harmonious and peaceful life between religious believers is carried out by TALI AKRAP by doing social activities in the community, one of which is the interfaith and belief dialog.

That society always develops, and changes is inevitable, so functional structural according to Raho (2007: 48) further states that changes that occur in one part will cause an imbalance and in turn will create changes in other parts. Therefore, all elements in the system must function and the community can carry out its functions properly. Realizing harmony among religious believers cannot be done by one party or religion only. Realizing peace and harmony among religious believers is a shared responsibility of all elements of society and all religious groups, so the objectives can be achieved maximally, all elements will function, and harmony will be achieved. Thus, when the government creates an interfaith community such as the Religious Community Forum (FKUB) which only houses religion and overrides the streams of belief, it cannot run and develop optimally to realize harmony in the society itself because there are elements left behind in society. On the other hand, with TALI AKRAP, all elements of religions and adherents of the streams of belief are united to work together in carrying out their functions to maintain peace and harmony among religious believers. The explanation of the functional structure of society is also in line with the opinion of Haryanto (2012: 20) stating that the structural functional approach/theory discusses human behavior in the context of the organization (society) and how the behavior can maintain the harmony in the organization/society. The condition that TALI AKRAP wants to maintain is the harmonious condition with no disputes or disparities among religious believers. Then, all members of the community together strive for peace and maintain harmony to the fullest, help resolve disputes among religious believers, carry out religious dialogs and other social activities to keep the society from being divided. Besides, the

believers of different religions can get along well and respect and value others, not only in words only but also in real life.

Talcott Parsons's functional structural theory is reinforced by Ritzer (2012: 404) stating that society as a social system must have at least four imperative functions, which are the characteristic of a system and related to the action system. These four functions are commonly known as AGIL which stands for functions Adaptation, Goal Attention (achievement of goals), Integration, and Learn Pattern Maintenance (fiduciary system/pattern maintenance).

1. Adaptation means that a system must address urgent external situational needs. The system must adapt to its environment and adapt the environment to its needs. TALI AKRAP adapts to the environment and embraces various groups, ages, religious figures to the streams of belief that exist in society. The existence of TALI AKRAP as an effort to maintain peace and create harmony among religious believers is packaged with the interfaith dialog, so that problems that occur in society due to lack of understanding and the nature of individuals or groups that are less open to other religions can be overcome to minimize conflicts among religious believers. This is impossible to achieve by one person or one religion, but all religions and streams of belief must work together. The community or group has function to carry it out. Understanding and adapting to the environment is needed in the initial process of the establishment of a religious group or community, so that conflict resolution can be right on target. Therefore, in carrying out this dialog activities involves those who have problems and the religions that exist in society and the streams of belief.
2. Achievement of Goals means that a system must define and achieve its main objectives. The main objective of AKRAP TALI as a social system is to create a peaceful, harmonious society, a whole state and nation, and citizens that comply with the law and partici-



pate in realizing it all. Therefore, a religious dialog is held to gather, discuss, find a way out, and keep the integrity of the community, by which tolerance among religious believers is achieved, conflicts reduced, and harmony created.

3. Integration means that a system must regulate the relationships between parts of its components. It also must manage relationships among the three other functional imperatives. Integration is combining or involving all the existing elements into a single unit in relation to the interfaith dialog that all people of different religions and streams of belief achieve common goals. This is reinforced by the statement of Retnowati (2014: 194) that integration is not to eliminate differences. The most important thing is the awareness to maintain balance to create harmonious social relations. By involving the components of society, institutions and government, the objective will be achieved optimally i.e. the community lives and is bound by the values and laws that apply, following the existing government. Thus, when there are problems in the society, they cannot be solved alone but by involving other elements. If there is an implementation of the law that is not yet known and the desired values such as religious tolerance which have not been maximally reached, there must be cooperation so that the law runs smoothly, and tolerance is realized. This is related to the themes in the interfaith dialog activities carried out by the AKRAP ROPE which involve not only interfaith and stream-of-belief leaders, but also sometimes the government. The themes are not only about the knowledge of religious teachings of one another, but also about law counseling, for example with the General Election Commission (KPU) before the general election. This is very useful for new voters and teaches the public for democracy and respect for others by appreciating and respecting any different choices. This also includes a form of tolerance, where tolerance among religious believers in this case concerns the sup-

port for certain parties whose candidates of leaders are of their own religion or come from the same class and sect. Freedom is upheld, but tolerance is also maintained.

4. Pattern maintenance means that a system must provide, maintain, and update both individual motivations and cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation. The activities of TALI AKRAP continue to develop. Religious dialogs not only discuss religious teachings, but also collaborates with the government in raising awareness of the law in society, participation as citizens and other social service activities that can strengthen character and community involvement to work together to maintain integrity and harmony in society. Motivation to continue to improve the community from the membership system to the scope of the area and dialog material is also carried out to suit the needs of the society and achieve maximum dialog effectiveness for the society. Unlike FKUB, TALI AKRAP invites the streams of belief in the society. It develops not only with religious dialogs but also with legal awareness and citizen participation. Hence, the peacefulness and harmony that are sought include interfaith life in general. As part of good citizens, TALI AKRAP is developing for the benefit of not only religions or its group but also the society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

The dialog activities of the Interfaith and Interbelief Community of Pantura (TALI AKRAP) are carried out by involving people from various religious and stream-of-belief backgrounds by selecting themes or discussions about things that often cause problems in the society to rise and giving education or insight on the teachings of each religion to minimize the imprecise stigma that develops in society. This community also socializes programs from the government to realize citizens who can be aware of the law, can take part and actively participate in realizing peacefulness and harmony among religious believers. The

interfaith dialog activities carried out by TALI AKRAP are in accordance with the model of dialog in the community and dialog of life and spiritual dialog. This is because the models of dialog in the community and dialog of life generally aim to resolve practical and actual things in life that are the shared focus of the members of TALI AKRAP, for example the relationship between religions and the State regarding religious freedom, the rights of religious minorities such as getting equal opportunities in society and government, and the problems that arise as a result of the marriage of adherents of streams of belief. Besides being in line with dialog in community and dialog of life, TALI AKRAP dialog activities are also in line with spiritual dialog because it aims to develop and deepen the spiritual life among various religious believers. This form of spiritual dialog through the aspect of special understanding of a religious teaching to a group is in accordance with the activities of TALI AKRAP. This has been done several times, such as the introduction of Catholic teachings through the Congregation of Divine Organization (PI) and the correctional dialog activity of people's wrong stigma about LDII teaching by LDII community of Kudus Regency in Panjang Village, Bae District, Kudus

The existence of TALI AKRAP is as part of the society which is also a social system of society and has the believers of religions and streams of belief as elements contained in the system. Then, the consequence is that each element must function with one another in creating balance in society. As a system, TALI AKRAP has four imperative functions, which are at the same time the characteristics of a system. The four functions are related to an action system consisting of A (Adaptation), G (Goal Attention = achievement of goals), I (Integration), and L (Learn Pattern Maintenance = fiduciary system/pattern maintenance) or commonly abbreviated as AGIL. The existence of adaptation among religious believers in the society aims to understand, recognize and accept one another as an effort to harmony among them. TALI AKRAP has a very clear purpose to make the people care, are

tolerant, live side by side and accept differences as gifts from God Almighty, all of which are integrated in social activities and interfaith dialog activities that exist for a long time and are carried out continuously. If necessary, the dialog also involves the government or other authorized institutions to make the synergy between the society and the government work to the fullest and ensure that the social system runs smoothly.

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