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Collective Memory, Religious Contestation, and the Policy Agenda for Religious Harmony: A Study in Cilegon City, Banten

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A B S T R A C T

Religious harmony is a strategic issue in social governance and public policy, particularly in regions undergoing social, economic, and demographic changes. The city of Cilegon, Banten, serves as a significant case study where industrialization and social transformation intersect with the community's history, religious identity, and collective memory. While existing research on religious harmony generally emphasizes tolerance, religious relations, regulations, and social conflict, studies linking collective memory and religious contestation to policy agenda-setting remain limited. This research aims to analyze how collective memory regarding historical experiences and religious identity is constructed and contested by various actors, and how this process influences the policy agenda for religious harmony in Cilegon. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, the research utilizes in-depth interviews, document analysis, and the examination of relevant historical and policy sources, analyzed through thematic and interpretive methods. The findings reveal that collective memory does not merely represent past experiences but also serves as a source for identity formation, the legitimization of interests, and the shaping of policy narratives within religious contestation. Social changes driven by industrialization, local identity dynamics, and differing interpretations of religious history influence how the issue of harmony is defined and prioritized within the policy agenda. Theoretically, this study expands the perspective of agenda-setting by integrating collective memory and religious contestation; practically, it underscores the importance of a harmony governance model that is contextual, dialogic, and sensitive to the community's history and collective memory ensuring policies address not only conflicting interests but also narrative management, actor relations, and the formation of an inclusive harmony agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Religious harmony is one of the strategic issues in plural society governance because it is related to the ability of the state and social actors to manage the diversity of religious identities, values, and practices (Danisworo et al., 2024). In the context of public policy, harmony is not only understood as a harmonious social condition, but also as the result of the process of defining problems, negotiating interests, and interacting between governments, religious organizations, and civil society in determining policy direction (Baker, 2016; Fuadi, 2024). Therefore, the management of harmony requires a governance approach that integrates social, historical, and political dimensions, not just the implementation of formal regulations (Hariri & Babussalam, 2024; Dancer, 2021; Wang et al., 2016).

Various studies on religious harmony in Indonesia generally focus on four main themes, namely tolerance between religious communities, the resolution of religious conflicts, regulations on the establishment of houses of worship, and the role of government institutions and the Forum for Religious Harmony (Ramadhan et al., 2026; Hutabarat, 2017; Takdir et al., 2021; Wulandari et al., 2024). These studies have succeeded in elucidating the factors that influence interreligious relations and the effectiveness of harmony policies but still tend to place conflict and tolerance as contemporary phenomena. Meanwhile, studies of how people's historical experiences are constructed into collective memory and then influence the formation of policy agendas are still relatively limited. Thus, there is conceptual space to connect the study of harmony with collective memory theory and policy processes (Feola et al., 2023; Nugroho, 2023; Verovšek, 2016).

The perspective of collective memory provides an explanation that the memory of the past is not just an accumulation of individual experiences, but a social construct that is maintained, inherited, and interpreted jointly by a community (Coraiola et al., 2018). Collective memory serves to shape group identity, establish symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them", and provide legitimacy to social and political actions in the present. In the development of contemporary studies, collective memory is also understood as a political resource because historical narratives can be mobilized to build public perceptions of certain issues and influence policy priorities. The relationship between collective memory and agenda formation can instead be understood through the agenda-setting perspective, particularly by examining how historically embedded narratives contribute to problem definition, mobilization, and policy attention (Ahmad, 2026; Liao & Dai, 2020; Masrizal et al., 2025).

In public policy studies, agenda setting theory explains that a social condition does not automatically become a policy problem but must first gain public and government attention through the process of defining problems (problem stream), the availability of policy alternatives (policy stream), and political support (politics stream). The three currents meet in a policy window that allows an issue to enter the government's agenda. Thus, the policy agenda is the result of a social and political process that involves the competition of narratives, actors, and interests, rather than a purely administrative response to an event.

In this study, Cairney & Jones (2016), multiple streams framework serves as the primary analytical framework for

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examining how issues of religious harmony move onto the policy agenda through the interaction of problem, politics, and policy streams. The perspective of Peterson & Jones (2016), is used as a complementary lens to explain how changes in policy image and policy arenas may shape the salience and institutional positioning of these issues.

The agenda-setting perspective can be further informed by scholarship on the changing relationship between religion, modernity, and public life. Jong (2025), challenges the assumption that modernity and secularism necessarily represent a straightforward displacement of religion, emphasizing instead the historically constituted ways in which religion, the secular, state institutions, and public life are organized and negotiated. Complementing this perspective, Tomalin (2018), demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily lead to the privatization or marginalization of religion; religious actors may instead re-enter or remain active in the public sphere through processes of religious "deprivatization." These perspectives suggest that social transformation should not be interpreted simply as religious decline, but as a possible reconfiguration of the institutional, political, and discursive conditions within which religious identities and claims are negotiated. This is particularly relevant to Cilegon, where industrialization and social transformation have interacted with historically embedded Islamic identities, collective memories, and competing claims over public and institutional space. Accordingly, this study does not treat "de-Islamization" as an established historical fact but examines it as an interpretive narrative within broader processes of religious contestation and public policy formation.

The city of Cilegon is a relevant context to explain the relationship between collective memory, religious contestation, and policy agendas. As a national strategic industrial area, the development of Cilegon was marked by the establishment of PT Krakatau Steel as the Trikora steel project which later developed into the center of the processing industry in the western region of Indonesia. On the other hand, Cilegon has a historical identity as a city of students that relies on the tradition of Islamic ulema and education, especially through the Al-Khairiyah Islamic Boarding School founded by KH Syam'un and has a genealogical relationship with the struggle of Geger Cilegon in 1888. The meeting between industrialization and religious identity creates social dynamics that cannot be explained only through economic or regulatory perspectives (Van Buren et al., 2020). Although history records that Cilegon was not the target area for missionary missionaries. The traces of the location of missionary work in Banten are Tangerang City, Ciater (Serpong) Tanah Tinggi, Kresek, Jengkol, Kampung Ki Snim, Tanah Sondjat, Lebak, Leuwidamar, Rangkas Bitung, Maja, Kanekes (Ilyasir, 2017).

The 1888 Geger Cilegon incident occupied an important position in the construction of the identity of the Cilegon community. For some people, the resistance of the ulama against Dutch colonialism was not only understood as a historical event, but also as a symbol of the struggle to defend religion and the dignity of the local community. These memories are then inherited through various socio-religious media, including pesantren education, oral traditions, and narratives known as the "wasit ulama". In this study, the "wasit ulama" is understood as a mechanism for the transmission of collective memory that allows historical experience to remain alive and becomes a reference in understanding religious issues in the present. This fact is confirmed from the study Riswanda et al., (2020), that the history of Cilegon which is carried out continuously from generation to generation with the threat that if there is a Church in Cilegon, there will be Geger Cilegon II through the will of the ulama. The will of the ulama has become a social doctrine in the community of Cilegon City to this day.

Departing from these empirical findings, the term de-Islamization needs to be placed more carefully as an analytical concept. In this article, de-Islamization is not positioned as a fact assumed from the beginning, but as an interpretive narrative used by some actors in interpreting social change, industrialization, and the relationship between the state and Islamic institutions. This position is different from the concept of secularization which emphasizes changes in the relationship between religion and social institutions, modernization which refers to socio-economic transformation more broadly, and state control over religion related to the regulatory mechanism of religious life. Therefore, this study does not aim to prove the existence of de-Islamization as a normative truth, but rather to analyze how these narratives are constructed, debated, and gained legitimacy in religious contestation.

This contestation can be seen in various policy events in Cilegon, especially related to the existence of the Decree of the Regent of Serang. Although administratively Cilegon has become an autonomous region and the legal status of the decision is disputed, the study found that the document continued to be reproduced through community demands in the 1990s and 2010s as part of the narrative of local identity protection. This fact shows that collective memory not only preserves historical memory but also plays a role in shaping the way society defines the issue of harmony and responds to the issue of establishing houses of worship.

The local context became even more relevant when the central government initiated the reformulation of the harmony policy through the amendment of the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 9 of 2006 and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 8 of 2006 into a Presidential Regulation, as followed up through the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 662 of 2021 concerning the Interministerial Committee for the Preparation of the Draft Presidential Regulation on the Maintenance of Religious Harmony. The policy reform shows that the issue of harmony is not only related to the implementation of regulations, but also to how local experiences, historical memory, and identity contestation are accommodated in the process of national policymaking.

Based on this description, this study fills the theoretical gap by integrating the perspective of collective memory, religious contestation, and agenda setting theory in explaining the process of forming a policy agenda for religious harmony. This research aims to analyze how the historical experience of the Cilegon people is constructed into a collective memory, how this memory is mobilized by various actors in religious contestation, as well as how this process affects the definition of problems and the formation of a policy agenda for religious harmony. Explicitly formulating the problem:

1. How is the historical experience of the Cilegon people constructed into a collective memory related to religious identity and relations?
2. How is collective memory contested and mobilized by the government, religious leaders, community organizations, and citizen groups?

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3. How does the contestation of collective memory affect the formation of the policy agenda of religious harmony in Cilegon City?

Theoretically, this study expands the application of agenda setting theory by including the dimension of collective memory as a source of problem framing, while practically providing a basis for the formulation of harmony governance that is more contextual, dialogical, and sensitive to the history of local communities.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive case study design to analyze the relationship between collective memory, religious contestation, social change, and the formation of a religious harmony policy agenda in Cilegon City, Banten. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding the experiences, perceptions, narratives, and interpretations of actors regarding history, religious identity, social change, and policy developments. Research analysis blends perspectives *collective memory* with theory *agenda-setting* and policy processes to explain how historical experience and narrative construction can gain relevance in the process of shaping policy agendas (Timulak & Elliott, 2019).

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and field observations, while secondary data was obtained through literature studies, historical documents, policy documents, community organization documents, community demand documents, and relevant online sources. The documents analyzed include the Decree of the Governor of West Java No. 336/A.I/2/SK/73 regarding land acquisition for the PT Krakatau Steel/Pertamina project and the Decree of the Regent of Serang No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 regarding the closure of churches/places of worship for Christians in the Serang Regency area. The documents of the demands of the community in 1990 and 2010 were also used to trace the development of religious issues from the social space to policy demands.

Informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience, or involvement in history, religious life, inter-religious relations, legal aspects, and harmony policies in Cilegon. The research involved six informants, namely AG, BP, BH, FM, AKI, and MA. AG and BP provide perspectives on the society and socio-religious dynamics of Cilegon; BH provides a Christian community/religion perspective; FM provides a legal/constitutional perspective; AKI is a scholar and Chairman of the Cilegon City FKUB; while MA is a historian of Cilegon. The interview was conducted in June–October 2021, with a follow-up interview with MA in January 2022 for deepening and clarifying historical information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim as a basis for coding and analysis.

The interviews used open guidelines that included the history and collective memory of the Cilegon community, *the will of the ulama*, the development of Al-Khairiyah, the industrialization and construction of PT Krakatau Steel, socio-religious changes, the policy of houses of worship, community demands, the case of Mardi Yuana and Stasi Santo Mikael, as well as the role of the government, religious leaders, community organizations, and FKUB. The informant's statement is not treated as a stand-alone historical fact, but rather as an actor's perception, experience, and interpretation. The information is then compared with historical documents, policy documents, literature, and other sources to distinguish between informant narratives and verifiable empirical evidence.

Data analysis using interactive models Miles (2016), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. At the data condensation stage, interview transcripts, documents, observation notes, and literature are thematically encoded. The main codes include collective memory, religious identity, the wasiat ulama narrative, Al-Khairiyah, industrialization, social transformation, religious contestation, local wisdom, policy demands, institutional response, *agenda-setting*, and policy reformulation. Next, the categories are analyzed to identify the relationship between collective memory, narrative construction, *problem framing*, mobilization of actors, policy demands, institutional responses, and the formation of policy agendas.

The credibility of the data is maintained through source triangulation and triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from six informants with historical documents, policy documents, literature, and other sources. The technique triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, documentation, observations, literature studies, and online source searches. Differences between sources are not eliminated but are analyzed as part of interpretive contestation. The analysis process also distinguishes three levels of information, namely documented empirical evidence, informant perception or interpretation, and analytical interpretation of researchers.

Data integration is done by placing interviews and documents in a complementary relationship. Interviews are used to understand how actors interpret history, identity, and social change; historical documents are used to reconstruct context and chronology; While policy documents are used to identify formal decisions, demands, and institutional responses. Thus, information that comes up in an interview is not directly treated as fact but is first checked through other sources. Convergence between sources is used to strengthen interpretation, while differences between sources are maintained as findings that indicate a contestation of meanings.

In this study, the issue of de-Islamization is treated carefully as an analytical interpretation that emerges in some of the actors' narratives, rather than as an independently proven historical fact. The interpretation is analyzed alongside possible alternative explanations, including industrialization, urbanization, demographic change, economic transformation, political centralization, and institutional change. This strategy allows research to explain how a historical narrative acquires political and policy significance without assuming a deterministic causal relationship.

From the ethical aspect, this study does not have a formal ethical clearance, so no claims are made regarding institutional ethical approval. To maintain the confidentiality of the informant, all names in the article are presented using initials. The informant explains the purpose of the interview and the use of the information for academic purposes, while the citations used in the article are placed in the context of scientific analysis and are not intended to provide an assessment of a particular individual or group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Memory and the Construction of Religious Identity in Cilegon City

The results of the study show that the dynamics of religious harmony in Cilegon City are closely related to the construction of historical memory regarding colonial experiences, community resistance, and the development of local religious institutions. The History Book *of Cilegon: The History of the City of Steel in the Western Tip of Java Island* records several episodes of resistance by the people of Cilegon, including the resistance of Nyi Mas Gamparan, Cikandi Udik, and the resistance led by KH Wakhia in the mid-19th century. In this narrative, religious elements are one of the important parts of the mobilization of resistance, especially through the concept *of sabil war*.

Interviews with Cilegon historians, MA, show that the experience of resistance of the Cilegon people cannot be explained only through religious factors. He identified at least four interrelated factors, namely the destruction of the Banten Sultanate and the psychological suffering of the aristocratic group, land control by colonial landlords, strong religious fanaticism, and the implementation of the colonial government administrative system that did not have strong roots in the traditional system of Banten society. According to him, the strong impulse in the resistance was also related to the desire to restore the Sultanate of Banten and expel colonial power from Banten.

These findings show that the historical memory of the Cilegon people has a complex character. Religious narratives are one of the important elements, but not the only factor that shapes people's historical experiences. Thus, the Geger Cilegon incident is not properly understood simply as a conflict between Islam and Christianity. It also has political, economic, agrarian, institutional, and local identity dimensions. This perspective is important because collective memory is not merely an objective repository of the past, but is a social process through which groups remember, choose, and give meaning to past experiences in the context of their social lives (Gensburger, 2016).

In the context of this research, collective memory is important not because all Cilegon people have identical interpretations of history, but because certain narratives about the past continue to be present in social and religious conversations. Thus, memory can serve as an interpretive framework that actors use to understand the social changes that occur later.

The Will of Ulama as a Mechanism for Transmission of Collective Memory

One of the important findings of the study is the existence of a narrative that is referred to by informants as the ulama's transmitted message. In the previous article, the *will of the ulama* was positioned as a form of "indoctrination" that was passed down through generations. However, based on a re-reading of the interview data, the concept is more accurately understood as a mechanism for the transmission of collective memory in the socio-religious environment of the Cilegon community.

The 1888 Cilegon Geger incident became one of the important sources for the formation of this narrative. In the history book of Cilegon, the event is described as the peak of the community's resistance to colonialism led by Kyai Wasyid. After the resistance was crushed, several figures were arrested, sentenced to death, or exiled.

Interviews with AKI show that there is a narrative that connects the experience with the message passed down by scholars from generation to generation. The informant stated that the experience of the punishment of the clerics during the colonial period was then associated with the perception of the relationship between the Dutch and Christians. He also stated that the message did not only come from the scholars who were victims of Geger Cilegon but also were reproduced by the scholars who lived after him.

The statement needs to be read as the perception and narrative of the informant, not as evidence that all scholars or the entire Cilegon community have the same view. However, the narrative is analytically important because it shows the existence of a social mechanism through which past experiences are connected to current religious issues.

In perspective *collective memory*, the process can be understood as the process of reproduction of memory within a particular social framework. Ekelund (2020), explained that collective memory is always constructed through social groups that provide a framework for the process of remembering. In the context of Cilegon, the message referred to as "*wasiat ulama*" It can be understood as a form of historical narrative transmission through a network of ulama, Islamic boarding schools, and the community.

Thus, this study does not conclude that the *will of the ulama* uniformly "indoctrinates" the entire Cilegon community. A more accountable finding is that there is a historical-religious narrative that is passed down across generations and then used by some actors as a framework in understanding interreligious relations and social change in Cilegon.

Industrialization, PT Krakatau Steel, and Social Space Transformation

Cilegon's social transformation cannot be separated from the construction of PT Krakatau Steel. Historically, the Cilegon steel industry development project has been started through a contract between the Government of Indonesia and the All-Union Export-Import Corporation on June 7, 1960. The project was then designated as a vital project and in 1970 PT Krakatau Steel was officially established based on Government Regulation No. 35 of 1970.

In 1973, additional land was acquired for the development of steel mills and the development of residential areas. The Decree of the Governor of West Java No. 336/A.1/SK/1973 records the acquisition of land for the purposes of the PT Krakatau Steel/Pertamina project and *the resettlement* area. In the development process, the Al-Khairiyah Islamic Boarding School became one of the affected institutions.

Al-Khairiyah has a special position in the social memory of Cilegon. The institution was founded by KH Syam'un, developed into a modern madrasah, and in its history has a genealogical relationship with KH Wasyid, one of the main figures of Geger Cilegon. Therefore, the relocation of Al-Khairiyah not only has a physical and economic dimension in the form of land acquisition but also has a symbolic meaning for some actors who connect the institution with the history of the struggle of the Cilegon community.

Interviews with the MA show that there is an interpretation that the choice of industrial estate development to the west that has an impact on Al-Khairiyah can be read as having a "double purpose": on the one hand as part of a national strategic project, but on the other hand it is interpreted by some as an effort to weaken the social base that has a connection with the memory of Geger Cilegon.

However, the statement must be placed proportionately. Based on the documentary evidence available in this study, there is not enough independent evidence to conclude that the

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construction of PT Krakatau Steel was deliberately designed as a de-Islamization project. The statement about "double intent" is an informant's interpretation of the development process, not documentary evidence of development policy intentions.

This distinction is very important. The research data is stronger to show that industrialization has changed the social space, economic structure, land use, and position of several local institutions, including Al-Khairiyah. In contrast, the direct causal relationship between industrialization and de-Islamization has not been adequately proven.

Therefore, industrialization in this study is placed as a structural context, not as a single cause of changes in religious relations. These changes can also be related to urbanization, demographic changes, population mobility, economic transformation, spatial changes, and institutional restructuring (Surya et al., 2020). With this approach, the analysis becomes more balanced and does not reduce the socio-religious changes of Cilegon to just one factor.

Decree of the Regent of Serang No. 189/Huk/SK/1975: Formal Policy and Social Legitimacy

One of the important documentary pieces of evidence in this study is the Decree of the Regent of Serang No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 concerning the closure of churches/places of worship for Christians in the Serang Regency area. The document states that the establishment of churches or the implementation of Christian congregational prayers is not allowed in the jurisdiction of Serang Regency, except for Serang City District, and worship activities are directed to existing churches in Serang City.

The document is empirical evidence of the existence of a policy restricting Christian activities and worship spaces at that time. However, the existence of the document does not in itself prove that the policy is part of a systematically designed de-Islamization project. The content of the policy can be proven through documents, while the motives and political processes behind it require interpretation based on various sources.

The administrative context also needs to be considered. In 1975 Cilegon was still part of Serang Regency. Cilegon City was only formed as an autonomous region through Law No. 15 of 1999, while Banten Province was formed in 2000. The change in the government structure then became one of the bases for the emergence of the debate on the enactment of the 1975 Decree.

An interview with FM, a constitutional law expert, showed that based on changes in the legal framework and the formation of Banten Province and Cilegon City, the decree is no longer seen as a positive law that applies, even though it remains a social polemic. The findings show the difference between legal validity and social legitimacy. A rule may lose or be formally questioned, but it remains a social symbol, historical reference, or source of legitimacy for political demands. In the context of Cilegon, the 1975 Decree then acquired a social meaning that went beyond its formal status.

From Collective Memory to Policy Agenda Mobilization

The relationship between collective memory and policy became increasingly visible in the documents of public demands in 1990 and 2010. On the commemoration of the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW on October 16, 1990, a document of demands was found addressed to the DPRD and the Regent of Serang Regency and penetrated to a number of government institutions and religious organizations. One of the demands is that the Serang Regent Decree No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 be confirmed and maintained.

Twenty years later, on December 7, 2010, a demand resurfaced that affirmed the rejection of the establishment of a church in Cilegon City. The document was signed and stamped by 197 community figures.

The two documents are important not because they prove that all Cilegon people have the same view, but because they show the repetition of issues and mobilization of demands. Narratives related to history and religious identity do not stop at social memory but are translated by a number of actors into demands directed at government and political institutions.

In perspective *agenda-setting*, a social condition does not automatically become a policy agenda. An issue needs to be defined as a problem, get the attention of the actors, be mobilized, and brought into the decision-making arena (Kingdon, 2011;Birkland, 2016). In the context of Cilegon, the 1990 and 2010 documents show a process that can be read as the transformation of historical narratives into policy demands.

Thus, the relationship between collective memory and policy agendas in this study is not linear. Memory doesn't automatically generate policies. Memory provides an *interpretive frame* that actors can use to define a condition as a problem, build legitimacy of demands, and mobilize support. The flow of the process can be formulated as follows: (historical memory) to (narrative construction) to (framing problems) to (mobilization of actors) to (policy demands) to (institutional response). This model makes an important contribution to *agenda-setting* analysis because it places the dimension of collective memory as one of the sources of *policy image* formation and *problem definition*.

Religious Contestation: Mardi Yuana and the Stasi of Saint Michael

The contestation regarding the religious space does not stop at the demands of the 1975 Decree. The case of Mardi Yuana in 1990 shows how issues of education, religious identity, and the use of social space can be a source of public unrest. The lawsuit against Mardi Yuana cites public objections that the school has most Muslim students, while there are concerns about the content of religious education provided.

These findings need to be read carefully because the public's objections can not only be interpreted as a rejection of Christianity. In the documents and research observations, there are also issues regarding the use of space and the suitability between the activities carried out and the status of building permits.

This dynamic resurfaced in the case of Stasi Santo Mikael. The inauguration of St. Michael's Stasi into St. Michael's Parish on September 29, 2021, then caused friction with some people. Based on an interview with BH, the issue was discussed in a meeting between FKUB, representatives of Catholic leaders, and Cilegon community leaders. The agreement that emerged was the cessation of religious activities in the building in question and the use of the building according to the designation declared as a multipurpose building.

This case shows a change in the issue management mechanism. If the 1990 lawsuit shows a form of community mobilization through written demands, the 2021 case shows the entry of the issue into the arena of institutional mediation through FKUB.

In an *agenda-setting* perspective, these changes can be understood as a *reframing process*. The issue that was previously

framed mainly as the issue of the existence of the church was then discussed through the framework of licensing, building use, conduciveness, and inter-stakeholder relations (Singh et al., 2023). Thus, an issue can survive on the social agenda but undergo a change of form when it enters a different institutional arena.

"Local Wisdom" as a *Policy Image*

The findings of the study show that the term "local wisdom" is used by several formal and informal actors when explaining the position of the Cilegon people towards the establishment of the church. Interviews with BP and AG, together with statements attributed to a Ministry of Religious Affairs official in a secondary source, indicate that there is a narrative that the prohibition or restriction of the existence of churches in Cilegon is part of the local culture and wisdom of the community.

These findings are interesting because they show that a rule or policy demand can gain legitimacy not only from formal legal aspects, but also from social narratives about local identities and traditions. In perspective Sabatier (2019), *policy image* It is a construction of a policy issue that affects how the issue is understood by the public and policy actors. In the context of Cilegon, the term "local wisdom" can be read as one of the *policy images* which is used to give meaning and legitimacy to certain positions in the contest for the establishment of houses of worship.

However, this study cannot conclude that "there should be no church in Cilegon" is a local wisdom that is accepted homogeneously by the entire community. The available evidence only shows that several actors use local wisdom narratives to explain or justify certain positions. This difference is important so that the research does not turn the perception of some actors into claims about the whole society. Thus, local wisdom in this context should be understood as an arena of meaning contestation, not as a single value that is not debated.

De-Islamization as an Interpretive Narrative

The term *de-Islamization* is one of the concepts used in the initial article to explain the change in socio-religious relations in Cilegon. In previous research, de-Islamization was defined as minimizing, reducing, or eliminating the role of Islam in various joints of life. However, the results of a review of the empirical data show that the concept needs to be placed more carefully. Interviews with MA and AKI show an interpretation that the relocation of Al-Khairiyah and the change in the state's relations with Islam can be understood as part of a process that weakens the position of Islam.

However, this interpretation is not identical to empirical evidence that there is a policy design that systematically aims to de-Islamize Cilegon. This study did not find any policy documents that explicitly stated that the construction of PT Krakatau Steel, the relocation of Al-Khairiyah, or the religious policy in Cilegon was designed with the aim of eliminating the role of Islam. Therefore, in this study, *de-Islamization* is more appropriately treated as an interpretive category that some actors use to read the changing relationship between the state, development, and religious life, rather than as an empirical conclusion that has been finally proven.

In fact, the data on Al-Khairiyah show a complexity that is not entirely in accordance with the interpretation of de-Islamization. Informants describe Al-Khairiyah as a moderate and nationalist institution. KH Syam'un has also been designated as a national hero based on the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia No. 123/TK/2018.

Al-Khairiyah's attitude towards the application of the single principle of Pancasila is also described as relatively accommodating. Mufti Ali explained that acceptance of the single principle does not cause internal polarization that divides organizations. The data provides an alternative perspective to the interpretation of de-Islamization. Changes in the relationship between the state and Islam can generate a response in the form of resistance, but it can also result in institutional adaptation and accommodation.

Thus, this study does not completely reject the concept of de-Islamization but limits its use as an analytical interpretation that needs to be contradicted by other explanations. Cilegon's social changes are more accurately understood as the result of the interaction between development, institutional changes, religious identity, collective memory, and inter-actor contestation.

Alternative Explanation: Industrialization, Urbanization, and Institutional Transformation

One important consequence of the data rereading is the need to consider alternative factors beyond the de-Islamization explanation. The construction of PT Krakatau Steel took place in the context of major changes in the economic structure and urban space. Land acquisition for industry and settlements, port development, and the development of Cilegon as an industrial area changed the pattern of space use and social relations of the community.

These changes allow for urbanization, population mobility, changes in work structures, economic transformation, and changes in social interaction patterns. These factors can theoretically affect interreligious relations without necessarily being driven by de-Islamization policies. In addition, the change in the administrative status of Cilegon from a part of Serang Regency to an autonomous region also changed the institutional structure of the government and the decision-making arena. These changes can affect the way the problem of harmony is defined and who is the actor who has the authority to respond to it.

Thus, this study does not place industrialization as the sole cause of changes in religious relations. Industrialization is more accurately understood as a structural condition that changes social space and opens new arenas for the contestation of interests. In this arena, religious actors, governments, community organizations, and other community groups then provide interpretations of the changes that occur. Collective memory is one of the sources of interpretation, but it is not the only one. This reading also explains why social change does not always produce the same consequences. Religious institutions such as Al-Khairiyah can adapt to political changes, while at the same time some community actors maintain a historical narrative of the protection of religious identity.

Collective Memory, *Agenda-Setting*, and Reformulation of Harmony Policies

Based on the overall findings, the relationship between collective memory, religious contestation, and policy agendas can be formulated as a non-linear process:

Figure 1. The Flow Collective Memory to Policy Reformulation.

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The memory of the colonial experience and Geger Cilegon provides a symbolic resource for the construction of identity. The narrative *of the will of the ulama* is one of the mechanisms for the transmission of memory. The relocation of Al-Khairiyah in the context of industrial development later became a point that allowed some actors to connect historical experiences with contemporary social change.

Furthermore, the Serang Regent Decree No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 became a policy reference which was later maintained in the demands of 1990 and 2010. At this point, historical memory and narratives are no longer just in the social space but begin to be used in the mobilization of policy agendas. In the framework, the process can be understood through the relationship between *problem stream*, *political stream*, and *policy stream*. Narratives about historical experiences and religious changes can shape *problem stream*; Mobilization of scholars and community organizations to form *political stream*; while the decree, harmony regulations, FKUB, and administrative mechanisms are part of the *policy stream*. When these currents interact, an issue has a greater chance of entering and staying on the policy agenda.

Meanwhile, the help explain how an issue can survive through change *policy image* and the policy arena. In the case of Cilegon, the narrative of "there should be no church" was then framed as "local wisdom" by some actors. When the problem enters the FKUB and the arena of contemporary government, the issue can experience *reframing* It is a matter of licensing, building use, conduciveness, and governance of inter-religious relations.

Thus, the actors who play a role in the agenda-setting process are not only the government. Scholars, religious leaders, community organizations, legislators, FKUB, and other community groups play a role in defining problems, maintaining narratives, mobilizing support, and influencing policy responses. These findings broaden the understanding of *agenda-setting* by showing that policy agendas are shaped not only by objective conditions or actual events, but also by the way actors remember and give meaning to past experiences. In other words, collective memory can be one of the sources of *problem definition* and *policy image*. However, its influence is not deterministic. Memory gains political power when it is mobilized by actors and gains access to the policy arena.

Implications for the Reformulation of Religious Harmony Policy

The findings of the study have several implications for the reformulation of religious harmony policies: First, the policy of harmony needs to pay attention to the historical context and collective memory of the community. The Cilegon case shows that the issue of establishing houses of worship is not always perceived as a purely administrative problem. For some actors, the issue is related to history, identity, and collective experiences that are passed down through generations.

Second, the government needs to make a clear distinction between formal legal status and social legitimacy. The Decree of the Regent of Serang No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 shows that a policy product can be questioned for its legal validity but still has social influence as a symbol of identity and reference for community demands.

Third, institutional mechanisms such as FKUB need to be placed not only as a conflict resolution mechanism after a conflict has occurred, but also as an arena for dialogue and conflict prevention based on local contexts. The case of Stasi Santo Mikael shows that when issues enter the mediation arena, different actors can negotiate regarding the use of space, religious activities, and the conduciveness of society.

Fourth, the policy of harmony needs to avoid using majority memory as a basis for restricting the rights of other religious groups. Historical memory can be recognized as part of a society's identity, but it should not turn into an exclusive legitimacy that hinders the equality of citizens.

Fifth, policies need to strengthen cross-actor participation. The original article emphasized the importance of *social equity*, multi-stakeholder engagement, religious activities, plurality-friendly education, and religious moderation. From the perspective of policy reform, the idea needs to be directed at governance that allows the government, religious leaders, community organizations, and the public to be involved in the process of forming a harmony agenda.

Theoretical Contributions: Collective Memory in *Agenda-Setting*

The findings of the study resulted in three main theoretical contributions: First, research shows that collective memory can function as a source of *problem framing*. Historical experience is not only a narrative about the past but can be used by actors to give meaning to contemporary socio-religious issues.

Second, research shows that memory does not automatically generate policy. Actors who mobilize, organizations that disseminate narratives, and institutional arenas that allow these demands to get attention are needed. The 1990 and 2010 demand documents are important evidence of the mobilization process. Third, research shows that the policy agenda is dynamic. An issue can move from social memory to political demands, then to the administrative and institutional mediation arenas, and undergo framing changes in each arena.

Analytical Model of Research Results

The following figure shows the construction from the beginning to the end of the research where collective memory is not a single determinant of policy but becomes a source of meaning that can be mobilized by actors in the agenda-setting process. At the same time, industrialization served as a structural context that transformed the social and institutional spaces in which contestation took place.

Figure 2. Analytical Model of the Research Results.

Historical Memory	Transmission of Memory	Construction & Contestation of Meaning	Problem Framing	Actor Mobilization	Policy Agenda	Institutional Response	Reframing & Negotiation
Cilegon Uprising – colonial experience – local identity	Religious scholars' legacies – *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) – networks of religious scholars – social narratives	Religious identity – local wisdom – interpretation of de-Islamization	Defining the establishment of houses of worship as an issue of harmony, identity, permitting, or the protection of local values	Religious scholars – religious figures – civil society organizations – legislators – government	1975 Decree – 1990 demands – 2010 demands – Mardi Yuana issue – St. Michael's Station	Government – FKUB (Inter-Religious Harmony Forum) – Ministry of Religious Affairs – community leaders	Governance of harmony that is more contextual, dialogic, and inclusive

The results of the study show that the policy agenda of religious harmony in Cilegon is not solely shaped by formal regulations or the government's response to actual conflicts. The agenda is also influenced by how actors construct the past, mobilize collective memory, frame problems, and fight for certain definitions of harmony and local wisdom. These findings are the

basis for the reformulation of harmony policies that are not only oriented towards conflict resolution but also pay attention to the management of collective memory, narrative contestation, inter-stakeholder relations, and the process of forming policy agendas.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the dynamics of religious harmony in Cilegon City cannot be understood solely through formal regulations or government responses to religious conflicts. Empirical findings show that collective memory of religious history, local identity, social change due to industrialization, and contestant experiences of religious spaces and institutions also shape the way actors understand and define issues of harmony. Collective memory in this context not only serves as a representation of the past but also becomes a source of legitimacy for the narratives, interests, and demands that actors bring into the policy arena.

The findings of the study also show that there are differences in interpretations between parties regarding changes in the position and social space of religion in Cilegon. Some informants interpreted the change as a process of de-Islamization, especially when it was linked to industrialization, changes in social space, the relocation of religious institutions, and the development of policies regarding houses of worship. However, this study does not place de-Islamization as an independently proven and systematic historical fact. Based on the available data, the term is more appropriately understood as an analytical interpretation of the experiences and narratives of some actors, which needs to be distinguished from the facts supported by historical and policy documents. At the same time, these changes can also be explained through other processes, such as urbanization, demographic change, economic transformation, political centralization, and institutional restructuring. Thus, the contribution of the research does not prove a single explanation but rather shows how various interpretations of socio-religious change are produced and contested in the public and policy spheres.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the study of agenda-setting by showing that the process of shaping policy agendas is not only influenced by objective conditions, political actors, or policy entrepreneurs, but also by collective memory and the construction of meaning to historical experience. Collective memory can serve as a source of problem framing that influences how a condition is defined as a problem, who is deemed to have the interest and legitimacy to speak up, and which issues gain attention on the policy agenda. Thus, this research expands the understanding of agenda-setting by placing the historical-cultural dimension as part of the process of constructing policy problems.

From the perspective of religious governance, the findings of the study show that the management of harmony is not enough through regulatory and administrative approaches. More responsive governance needs to pay attention to collective memory, local identity, intergroup relations, and narrative differences that develop among governments, religious leaders, community organizations, and religious communities. The reformulation of the harmony policy therefore needs to be directed not only at conflict management, but also at narrative management, communication between stakeholders, and the formation of an inclusive agenda.

This research has limitations. First, some information about historical experience is obtained through the narrative and interpretation of informants so that not all of it can be treated as independently verified historical facts. Second, the limited number of informants and the selection purposively make the research findings not intended to be generalized statistically to the entire Cilegon community. Third, the limited availability of several historical documents makes some past political and institutional processes unable to be fully reconstructed. Therefore, the conclusions of the study should be understood as a contextual interpretation based on triangulation of interviews, documents, observations, and literature, not as a final causal reconstruction.

The next research can develop a comparative study by comparing Cilegon with other cities or regions that have different industrialization experiences, religious history, and harmony dynamics. The comparative study can test whether the relationship between collective memory, religious contestation, problem framing, and policy agenda is a special characteristic of Cilegon or a pattern that is also found in other regional contexts. Future research may also combine qualitative approaches with policy document analysis, process tracing, or longitudinal studies to gain a stronger understanding of how collective memory and religious contestation evolve into policy agendas over time.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants and was approved by the Ethics Committee of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Generative AI Use.

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly to assist with language editing, improving grammar, clarity, readability, and the overall presentation of the manuscript. All AI-generated outputs were carefully reviewed and revised by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the scientific content, originality, accuracy, and integrity of this article.

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