Female Imam and Khatib: The Shifting in Worship Traditions from Progressive to Conservative in Sungai Landia, West Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract: The changes in the implementation of eid prayers in Sungai Landia by abolishing women’s rights to become imam and khatib do not necessarily eliminate the progressive sides of Sungai Landia women. This study aims at exploring the persistence of progressive sides in the transition process of eid prayer tradition from female imam and khatib to conservative fiqh provisions. This research is qualitative in nature with the main data obtained from community leaders and women from Sungai Landia. The data analysis was carried out using a descriptive method. This study concludes that the process of changing to conservative fiqh was carried out by going through the stages of fiqh scientific deepening and socialization for four years to avoid chaos in society. The community began to realize their mistake because of criticism from various parties. The criticisms were not only from the local community, but also from the ulama who were invited to give religious lectures. Sungai Landia women accepted the change with the condition that male and female congregations must still be separate in implementing eid prayers even though the imam and khatib are men. There are progressive sides that are still maintained by paying attention to aspects of gender equality and social justice to create peace in worship as evidenced by the existence of public recognition for women to be separate from men in carrying out the eid prayers.

Keywords: Female imam and khatib; Shifting; Progressive; Conservative

Introduction

Eid prayer is a worship performed by Muslims twice a year which is during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. Both events are Muslim holidays and the celebration begins with carrying out two rak’ahs (units) prayer in congregation by all Muslims, followed by listening to a sermon afterwards. The fiqh arrangements regarding the eid prayer are clear, in which the requirement to be the imam of the eid prayer is a man. (Qurtubi, n.d., p. 105) This is not only for eid prayers but for all prayers that are performed in congregation. In contrast to that, there are at least two places that allow women to be imam and khatib for eid prayers; Balingka and Sungai Landia. Both areas are located in Agam Regency, West Sumatra Province. For Balingka area, this practice still persists today even though the congregation is specifically for women and children. However, for Landia River area, this practice has been abandoned and has returned to fully practicing the provisions of conservative fiqh which makes men the imam and khatib during the eid prayers.

Similar studies have been conducted by several researchers which can be categorized into three groups. The first is research on women becoming imam for prayer based on hadith and fiqh studies, for example research conducted by Trigiyatno (2014), Maidin (2016), and Syamsurijal (2016). The second is research on female imam and their relevance to gender mainstreaming, for example the studies conducted by Abubakar & Mutawali (2020) and Muzani (2014). Apart from raising the controversy surrounding female imams, these two studies principally emphasize gender equality in Islam. The third is research that
specifically explores the practice of imam and khatib in conducting eid prayers by Busyro (2017) and Ikhwan et al., (2022). In this third category Busyro puts more emphasis on the implementation of gender-oriented progressive Islam in the implementation of the eid prayer in Balingka, while Ikhwan tries to link this practice and the concept of fiqh. According to him, the ups and downs of the development of fiqh thoughts have influenced the practice of female imam and khatib in the eid prayers. Moderate fiqh has provided space for women to become leaders in the eid prayers, while traditional fiqh which was developed later has eliminated women’s rights to lead the implementation of the worship. This traditional and moderate fiqh dialogue led to the elimination of the tradition of female imams and khatibs in Balingka so that there was no longer a difference in the implementation of Eid prayers in Balingka with other regions. As for this research, the fiqh dialog is not able to eliminate the tradition of separating men and women in the Eid prayer, only able to change the imam and khatib from women to men.

This paper aims at examining the shift in Islamic worship tradition which was previously considered progressive, but are now returning to the conservative one. It was indicated by the abolition of woman’s right to become an imam and khatib during eid prayers. Based on that, the research questions were formulated as follows; first, how is the process of shifting in the implementation of the progressive eid prayers to the conservative ones? Second, what are the factors underlying the shifting in the implementation of the progressive eid prayers to the conservative ones? Third, is the shift in worship tradition from progressive to conservative acceptable to women’s groups in Sungai Landia? These three questions led to data collection and discussion concerning this topic.

This paper is based on the argument that modern Islam, especially those related to gender mainstreaming, is synonymous with progressive Islam (Aminudin, 2021; Sarifudin, 2019). The implementation of the eid prayers by providing space for women to become imams and khatibs, even though the congregation is indeed specifically for women, is already a progress in practicing worship in Islam. This practice is absolutely not common in the realm of classical fiqh and also in the view of conservative thinkers. The progress of the world of education today and the number of generations of Muslims who have taken higher education should be able to strengthen progressive Islamic practices that occur in the area (Rochmad, 2013). But what has happened is the opposite, the development of education actually returns them to conservative Islam.

Literature Review

The Shifting

The emergence of a paradigm shift theory that has been valid, proves that the paradigm can be compared one step further, according to the progress of science, with the previous paradigm (Nurkhalis, 2012) The initial idea was presented in detail Thomas Kuhn (1970), calling it a “paradigm shift” in his work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. According to Heriyanto (2003) paradigm shifts are the transformation of scientific thinking from a classical point of view towards a new point of view as a form of pattern development, a value that can be accepted by intellectual circles at a certain time. Kuhn (1970) proposed two conditions for a paradigm shift to occur; first, there is an anomaly in “normal science”, and second, there is an alternative paradigm. A paradigm begins with a researcher’s investigation uncovering an issue or problem that is the central point and is formulated in a certain theoretical framework that ends in a system of beliefs, values, and scientific techniques which are understood as a general perspective or worldview (Smart, 1981). The function of the paradigm that has become worldview is to emphasize as a driver of moral and social change. Thus, according to A. Aşıkgenç (1996 & 2000), understanding worldview is intended as a principle in scientific activity towards human behavior. The paradigm shift offered by Kuhn can be interpreted as; first, the existence of a new point of view because the old logic of thinking is irrelevant in solving new problems. Second, the development of science will always bring up new assumptions. Third, the emergence of a new paradigm is a solution, even though it has conflicting implications which seem to clash with the old paradigm which tends to be skeptical (Kuhn, 1970; Ulya & Abid, 2015).
The paradigm shift offered by Kuhn is a revolution against the views of Emile Durkheim in the theory of Social Facts, and BF Skinner in the theory of Behaviorism, which Kuhn considered as a scientific paradigm (Digarizki & Al Anang, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Kuhn, the scientific paradigm revolutionized Weber’s view of Social Interaction theory (Sahdana, 2022). Scientific truth which will always change revolutionary is a systematic combination in the phenomenon of scientific progress which is marked by the development of scientific facts and also proportional to the development of the scientific method which, according to Kuhn, will crystalize into a metaphysical, sociological, and constructive paradigm (Ritzer, 1992). In the early 1990s, Kuhn’s thoughts became a debate among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals to be contextualized and focused in the discourse of Islamic studies. The dialectical process of Islamic legal thought will continue to transform objectively throughout history, but within the Islamic paradigm a normative and empirical methodological framework with an interdisciplinary approach is also needed, like the term proposed by Amin Abdullah (1996) as integration-interconnection. In line with Kuhn’s thought in applying paradigm shifts, it lies in a methodological framework that does not immediately change the theory, towards natural phenomena or current situations that occur. In such a manner that its alignment in Islamic thought does not shift/change legal texts (the Quran and Hadith), but revolutionizes the methodology in understanding texts.

Female Imams

The discussion about female imams is based on a hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud in which the Prophet SAW allowed and even ordered Umm Waaraqah to lead prayers in her relatives’ environment (Hanbal, 2001, p. 255; Sulaimân, n.d., p. 161). This hadith does not specifically explain the prayer congregation led by Umm Waraqah, whether it was only women or including men. However, from Umm Waraqah’s request to the Prophet SAW to appoint a man there to become the muezzin, it is assumed that the congregation she led also included men (Maidin, 2016). This is what then becomes a debate among scholars which can be categorized into three opinions: First, absolutely permissible, permissible with certain restrictions, and absolutely prohibited. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Dawud al-Zahhari, al-Muzani, and Abu Saur were those who absolutely allowed it. According to them, the requirement for an imam is the most fluent person in reading the Quran and faqih (has extensive knowledge of Islamic law), as the hadith narrated by Imam Muslim (al-Naisabûrî, n.d., p. 465). In addition, the hadith which tells the story of Umm Waraqah leading her family also strengthens this.

As for the opinion that it is permissible for limited groups, such as only for female congregations, or for male congregations among the family, or only for sunnah prayers and not for obligatory prayers, ibn Qudamah put forward the condition that the woman is more fluent in reading than the others. The legal basis is the hadith of Abu Dawud about Umm Waraqah leading her family prayers. The third group is the scholars who absolutely prohibit it, they were Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, and Imam al-Shafi’i (Trigiyatno, 2014). They related this to the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari which states that it is unfortunate for a people to be led by a woman (Bukhârî, 1422, p. 8). Although this hadith does not specifically regulate congregational prayers, it generally prohibits the leadership of women in public areas, including being imam. In addition, there are other hadiths that specifically designate men as imams and prohibit women from taking that position, including the hadiths narrated by Abu Dawud (n.d., p. 162) and al-Tirmidzî (1975, p. 187). Thus, according to Ikhwan et al., (2022) the majority of scholars in principle prohibit women from becoming imams and the legal consequences arising from this prohibition make these prayers invalid, especially for congregations who become makmum (followers).

Progressive Islam

Progressive Islam is a new offer in the Islamic world that is more responsive to accepting various contextual interpretations that are in accordance with human values. This progressive thought is aimed at making Islam more humane, gender-justice, democratic, and defending oppressed people (Khulaisie, 2019; Sholeh, 2020). Busyro et al., (2022) say that Abdullah Saeed is one of the well-known figures in promoting progressive thinking after Omid Safi. He said that the characteristics of progressive Muslims should meet at least six criteria. First, the ability to make substantial changes in Islamic law so that it can be adapted to
the development of Muslim society. Second, a new method of ijtihad is needed so that it is able to answer contemporary legal problems. Third, being able to combine traditional fiqh science with modern science developed in the West. Fourth, the ability to reflect on Islamic law in all fields, such as morals, economics, law, technology, and the intellect itself. Fifth, being able to break away from certain schools of thought in conducting studies of contemporary Islamic law. Sixth, pay attention to aspects of human rights globally, gender equality, social justice, and peaceful relations with non-Muslims. Ulin Nuha (2020) says that progressive Islam places more emphasis on a new Islamic civilization that is far from radicalism and more humane.

Progressive Islamic thought according to Omid Safi is a form of dissatisfaction with liberal Islam which is too flexible in interpreting Islamic teachings, and at the same time is a criticism of radical Islam which is so rigid in understanding religious texts. The position of progressive Islam is in the middle by promoting a more moderate Islam. This is because the modern world is faced with the convergence of multi-religious and multi-cultural people’s lives (Aminudin, 2019), and this requires serious thought so that Islam can strengthen itself as a religion that is in accordance with the changing times it is going through. Furthermore, Reza Adeputra Tohis (2021) says that the progressive Islamic movement promoted by Safi does not only target religious understandings, but also to an unequal economy (social capitalism), moderate Islamic political movements, and fundamentalism which reflects more the style of an ancient society that tends to be hostile, as well as an agenda to promote social justice. In this case, in general, the task of a Muslim is to be able to understand and implement Islamic teachings in accordance with the context of modernity that can be accepted by all Muslims to create global Islamic unity. Furthermore, this progressive understanding can show Islam to the international community as a religion that is peaceful and fair, respects pluralism and gender-justice, and in accordance with the enforcement of human rights which are widely recognized internationally (Arrasyid et al., 2023).

Conservative Islam

Conservative is an effort to maintain or preserve old (ancient) traditions, while limiting changes. Those changes can come from globalization, information technology, or changes in behavior or lifestyle. Pratama (2019) says that conservatism is a political philosophy theory that supports traditional values. According to Maghfuri (2019) conservatism is a religious understanding and practice that is based on literal texts (Quran and Sunnah) or doctrines, and ancient teachings, it even usually becomes fundamentalist Islam in order to extremely achieve political goals. Religious behavior that arises from a conservative understanding is usually also shown by a religious attitude that is full of enthusiasm, obedience, and seems more Islamic compared to other Muslims. In another language, Zuhdi (2018) says that conservative groups generally reject modern, progressive, and liberal interpretations of Islam. Furthermore, conservative understanding hardly provides an opportunity to reinterpret the text so that it seems textual and rigid. Thus, conservative is an effort to maintain old traditions and does not want to change these traditions even though the conditions faced and scientific developments already require changes. Whereas, conservatism is a very strong understanding to reject all forms of interpretation and try to defend and fight for it even through violent (radical) channels.

According to Van Bruinessen, as quoted by Jubba et al. (2021) and Maghfuri (2019), there are three reasons for the growth of conservative Islam in Indonesia. First, the reality of Indonesian Islamic society, which has generally been conservative since the beginning. Second, moderate Islamic groups are more oriented towards practical politics which causes the development of moderate Islam itself to be weak. Third, the strong influence of the Middle East in Indonesia, which in general also carries a conservative ideology. Regarding the number of terms that appear in discussing the meaning of conservative, Maghfuri (2019) says that conservative, fundamentalist, and salafi have the same meaning which is a form of literal religious understanding and does not accept reinterpretation, whereas when this understanding is demonstrated in the form of violence, acts of violence in religion is called radical. This group is not only growing in Indonesia, but also in various other Islamic countries such as Turkey and Malaysia. In Turkey, conservative Islamic movements have succeeded in incorporating Islamic education into the country’s
eductional curriculum since 1990 and have gradually phased out the secular curriculum (Guven, 2019). In Malaysia, conservative Islam has shown its movement in the political field with the victory of the PAS party (Islamic Party of Malaysia) in the general elections in the state of Trengganu in 1999, as well as proving the defeat of Islam Hadhari (moderate Islam) promoted by Abdullah Ahmad Badhawi (Fauzi Abdul Hamid & Ismail, 2014). Thus, conservative Islam does not only focus on the practice of religion in the form of worship, but has influenced the course of Islamic politics in various Islamic countries and is always dealing with moderate and progressive Islamic understanding and movements.

Method

This research is qualitative research which was conducted in Sungai Landia, one of the areas in Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Data sources were from community leaders, scholars, and women in the research location. The data were collected by conducting interviews and observation (Elfia et al., 2022). The questions in the interview were well prepared and related to research questions, but if the informants’ answers led to something the writer had not thought of before, the writer would explore these answers with adjusted questions. The observations were made to strengthen the interview data which were done by observing people’s behavior (Wahyuti et al., 2020) regarding the implementation of the Eid prayer, and observing the research location to obtain additional data which led to a shift in the procedure for implementing the Eid prayer from progressive to conservative. After collecting the data, the writer grouped it according to the data group, and then they were arranged systematically. For analyzing the data, descriptive and inductive methods were used. The descriptive method was used to describe and explain the data more, while the inductive method is used to draw general conclusions from the subjective data obtained from each informant. In addition, data analysis was also carried out by linking one event to another, one tradition to another, to be able to find a relationship between traditions in that area and the shift in the implementation of the Eid prayer from progressive to conservative.

Results and Discussion

The Practice of Female Imams and Khatib Then and Now

The implementation of the Eid prayer at the Sungai Landia by appointing women as imams and khatib is something interesting because it has never been practiced anywhere else. Some of the informants interviewed did not know the history how this practice began. The results of interviews with several informants are written as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Interview Result</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnel (65 yo)</td>
<td>The female imam and khatib who used to lead the eid prayers at the Sungai Landia was Tuo Maziar who died in 2018 (Tuo means the old one). She was a Quran recitation teacher, and in fact all Quran recitation teachers there were women. The implementation of the eid prayer led by Tuo Maziar had been going on for a very long time until 2016. She performed as a khatib by reading the text based on the pillars of the sermon which was previously corrected by one of the male scholars there named Inyiak Haji Mustafa (Arnel, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Akbar Chaniago (50 tahun)</td>
<td>Tuo Maziar was one of the women who often becomes the imam and khatib of eid prayers, but apart from that there were also other women, they were Tuo Jawaher and Tuo Nurmailis. These three women always took turns leading the eid prayer congregation every year, even though the congregation they led was a group of women and children (Chaniago, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Fadilla (48 yo)</td>
<td>I have ever been the imam and khatib of the eid prayer at Sungai Landia, but only once. Actually, several women and I were prepared as cadres to replace the old female imams, but we did not stay in Sungai Landia village (have moved to another place). In my</td>
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</table>
opinion, the implementation of the eid prayer is normal, there is no need to debate it. In fact, this has spurred the enthusiasm of generations of young women in Sungai Landia to study religion by going to Islamic boarding schools. However, because they do not stay in Sungai Landia, in the end the female cadres who would continue the religious tradition were no longer responsive to the development of religious tradition in their hometown (Fadilla, 2023).

Asrul (44 yo) Geographically the Landia River consists of Ateh Village and Baruah Village (Ateh means upper and Baruah means lower). There are two mosques there, the Al-Ihsan Mosque in Ateh Village and the Istiqamah Mosque in Baruah Village. Annually, male and female congregations take turns in carrying out the eid prayers in both mosques. The male congregation is led by a man, and the female congregation is led by a woman. Separation of male and female congregations is due to large population while there are only two mosques. In addition, this separation also means the unification of the congregation from Ateh Village and Baruah Village, so that there will always be friendship among the women there. The solidarity of women is very high regarding any traditional or religious events held in this village. Even though men and women have still been separated in the implementation of the eid prayer, but since 2016 the imam is already male, no longer female (Asrul, 2023).

Based on the excerpts from the interviews above, it can be understood that previously women held strategic positions in the religious field, especially in teaching recitation and writing of the Quran to children in Sungai Landia. The imam and khatib for the eid prayer were also entrusted to these women. It is recorded that there were three female figures who alternately became imams and khatibs, and all of them were religious teachers in Sungai Landia. The practice of female imams and khatibs had been going on for a long time in Sungai Landia, West Sumatra and ended in 2016. Initially, this practice was due to the limited prayer area, thus male and female congregations had to be separated. Even though they were separated, the separation was also to maintain unity and brotherhood between Ateh Village and Baruah Village. It seems that this practice was initiated by a male ulama there named Inyiak Haji Taha because he was the teacher of Tuo Maziar and other female imams. The interview above also illustrates that one of the reasons the women accepted the change was because there were no more cadres of female imams and preachers who settled in Sungai Landia after the death of the three women, although there were cadres who were prepared, but they did not stay there (migrate) and did not respond again to replace the three women. When there is a demand for a conservative shift, there is certainly no argument that can be presented by the women's group to maintain the tradition.

The Shifting Process
Based on the practice of the Eid prayer above, it does not mean women lead men, but there are separate congregations between men and women. The male congregation is led by a male imam and vice versa. The process of separation between men and women was stated informants as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Arnel (65 yo)</td>
<td>Planning to change the practice of women imam and khatibs had been planned since 2012, but could not be implemented at that time. We have to change the old tradition gradually because we don’t want chaos in society, especially women’s groups. We started the change by increasing people’s knowledge first. We asked the lecturers we invited to Sungai Landia to study the provisions of Islamic law regarding the eid prayer (Arnel, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asrul (44 yo)</td>
<td>The change in the implementation of the eid prayer was based on several Ateh villagers who had received higher education and were more familiar with sharia/fiqh. They tried to straighten out the practice of the eid prayer in accordance with the fiqh provisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
they had learned. We have also invited lecturers from State Islamic University of Bukittinggi City who specifically gave lectures to the public about the provisions for the eid prayer. In his lecture he explained that the practice of the eid prayer that occurs in Sungai Landia was not commonly carried out by people in other places and was different from the Sunnah of the Prophet, thus it must be returned to the true sharia, where the imam and khatib must be men (Asrul, 2023).

The information above illustrates that the process of shifting the form of the implementation of the Eid prayer on Sungai Landia began with providing sufficient knowledge to the public by bringing in scholars from outside Sungai Landia to provide religious knowledge, especially the fiqh of prayer. It seems that the knowledge provided by the scholars who were invited there was very influential in shifting the way of worship carried out by the community. Moreover, many Sungai Landia’s younger generations had taken higher religious education which allowed them to understand the Eid prayer procedure better, based on the sunnah of the Prophet. Therefore, the steps taken to shift to normal prayer practices have been carried out in earnest to change this tradition. Therefore, there was generally no negative reaction from society, especially women, when this tradition changed.

Social and Women’s Reaction
Social reactions concerning a change of tradition are common, and Sungai Landia society is no exception. The object of change was focused on women who used to practice the Eid prayer with female imam and khatib. Reactions and arguments about the change are illustrated in the following information:

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnel (65 yo)</td>
<td>The plan to change the practice of Eid prayers at Sungai Landia began with an intense debate held at Al-Ihsan Mosque in 2016. Pros and cons occurred between the groups who wanted to maintain the tradition and those who wanted to change it. Women’s groups did seem to have much response to the proposed change concerning reduction to their rights to be as independent as men in leading prayers. After undergoing quite a long debate, finally the women’s group was able to accept and agreed on deliberative decisions (Arnel, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Akbar Chaniago (50 yo)</td>
<td>There were no more female cadres capable of becoming imams and khatib in Sungai Landia. Even though there were some women who had religious education and were able to become khatibs, they migrated far away to other places. Therefore, in accordance with the conditions, the rejection from women’s groups was not supported by strong arguments, especially when they were faced with the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad concerning the practice of eid prayer. Under these conditions, the women’s group finally accepted the change (Chaniago, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Fadilla (48 tahun)</td>
<td>At first, we objected to this change, because we thought it would break up the unity that had long existed among women in Sungai Landia, but because the purpose of this change was precisely to carry out worship in accordance with the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and had been discussed by the community by involving women, in the end we agreed. The change is only about male imams and khatibs, in practice it is still separated between female and male congregations (Fadilla, 2023).</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Based on the table above, it can be understood that in principle the women in Sungai Landia did not object to the shift in the procedure for carrying out the Eid prayer as had been practiced so far. The shift is only in terms of the imam and khatib who are required to be male, but still separate between male and female congregations. Moreover, in reality, the are no more cadres of female imams and khatibs, making it difficult to maintain this tradition. Therefore, the shift went well without any chaos in the community.
The Support and Tradition That Goes Around

Carrying out a tradition cannot be separated from other traditions that surround it. Removing one of them will have an impact on the loss of other traditions (Busyro et al., 2023). Therefore, the tradition of eid prayers with female imams and khatibs did not stand alone, there were traditions that must be carried out simultaneously. The following are excerpts of interviews with several informants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radiah (64 yo)</td>
<td>The residents of Ateh Village and Baruah Village are the native. There are no migrants from outside who build houses and settle in this village. They cannot be separated in carrying out the holidays. The reason for this is because the two villages have been linked by marriages between them. Thus, people who are married are still in the same village. Because of that we are related to each other, marrying each other between different tribes. When the eid prayers must be separated, we, as women of Ateh Village and Baruah Village, felt uncomfortable. The Taklim al-Ihsan Council is a combination of the women of the two villages. We agreed not to join the men in the eid prayer, even though we are no longer allowed to be imam and khatib because now we consider that the women’s union in our village is more than arguing about female imam and khatib (Radiah, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kArnel (65 yo)</td>
<td>The kinship that has existed between Ateh Village and Baruah Village due to marriages made the women’s union in Sungai Landia very strong. Their only request is to keep the eid prayers separate from the men, even though we actually want to carry out the eid prayers like in other places, where men and women pray together. But to maintain the unity of the women, finally the men agreed to remain separated as before, even though now the imam and khatib are men (Arnel, 2023).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Akbar Chaniago (50 yo)</td>
<td>Judging from the social conditions of women in Sungai Landia, they prefer to gather with other women, both at traditional events and at other religious events. Gathering together with men in various activities is not their preference (Chaniago, 2023)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on some of the information above, it can be understood that there is one thing that the Sungai Landia women consider in continuing to separate themselves from the male congregation in carrying out the eid prayer, it is the women’s union. The Sungai Landia women’s association has been very strongly intertwined because not only for the reason of living in the same village, but more than that. In general, they have relatives throughout the village, both marital relations and ethnic kinship. The tradition of gathering among fellow women does not only occur during eid prayers, but in all traditional and religious activities. Therefore, there are logical reasons why the Sungai Landia women want to remain separated in carrying out the Eid prayers with the male congregation.

The Survival of Progressive Aspects in The Shift of Worship to Conservative in Sungai Landia

Sungai Landia is one of the villages in IV Koto District, Agam Regency, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia, with an area of 16,072 with a population of 2,359 people, consisting of 1,122 men and 1,237 women (Palanta, 2020). Sungai Landia directly borders Balingka Village, which also has a tradition of making women imams and khatibs, although it has now been abandoned (Busyro, 2017; Ikhwan et al., 2022). Deputy Governor of West Sumatra, Audy Joinaldy, said that the Landia River would be promoted as a cultural tourism destination in West Sumatra because it had a special culture and beautiful panorama. He conveyed this during his working visit to Sungai Landia on February 16th, 2022 (Barat, 2022). This proves that Sungai Landia is one of the priority villages to be developed as a tourism village in West Sumatra because it still maintains an interesting local culture, one of which is the tradition of eid prayers which is different from other regions.
The interview result did not show any connection between the practice of female imam and khatib in Sungai Landia and the women’s emancipation movement, because the first perpetrators of this activity were no longer there. The informants did not know certainly the reason for the separation of men and women during the eid prayers. However, the author strongly suspects that the origin of this specialization was due to the desire of women to separate themselves from men during eid prayers and this was also supported by the charismatic ulama of Sungai Landia, Inyiak Haji Taha. This is because they already have sufficient knowledge to be equal to men in various matters, including religious knowledge. Apart from that, it is impossible for the practice of this religious ritual to be different from other Muslims if it is not started with sufficient knowledge for it. If it were only natural factors, there would be many villages around Mount Singgalang, with the same topography, which would also do the same thing, but in fact this practice only happened in Nagari Sungai Landia. According to the author, natural factors and the limited mosques are only supporting factors for the occurrence of this religious tradition.

The tradition of female imam and khatib at Sungai Landia has ended since 2016 and the Eid prayers have been led by male imam and khatib just like the sunnah of the Prophet SAW. However, this shift does not necessarily shift the tradition of women there to continue to gather with other women in all traditional and religious activities. Changing tradition is not an easy thing, many things need to be done before the tradition is actually changed to other forms. The desire of community leaders in Sungai Landia to make changes began in 2012, but sufficient knowledge was needed beforehand to ensure these changes occur. This is justified Salceda et al., (2020), according to him, without socialization and an adequate knowledge base, it will be vulnerable to rejection. According to Chigbu (2019) regarding the rights that women have had thus far, negotiating is necessary to change them because there are different interests between men and women in these changes. In a different theme, says that in making a change to an established religious tradition, it is necessary to carry out intensive and massive outreach to the community in order to avoid misunderstanding and public chaos.

Negotiations carried out by the women of Sungai Landia resulted in a policy to continue to give them their rights to carry out the eid prayer as was the previous tradition on which the female congregation was separated from the male congregation during the eid prayer. They take turns occupying different mosques, even though the imam and khatib are already men. There is a progressive part that is still being maintained amidst the strong currents of the transition to conservatives. The progressive part is the recognition of the existence of women to be equal to men in carrying out their religious activities. Dzuhayatin (2020) says that in the study of gender equality, women’s position in this matter has received recognition in the public sphere by not opposing religious theological concepts, especially in carrying out the eid prayer. This acknowledgment at the same time generates benefits for the people of Sungai Landia because the decision to make a shift has taken into account the sociological values and traditions of the community (Reskiani et al., 2022). Thus, the shift theory put forward by Kuhn et al., (2012) to make changes in accordance with normal knowledge and provide alternatives that can be accepted by all people has been realized in Sungai Landia. The wisdom of the entire Sungai Landia community is also in accordance with the rule that in making changes to tradition one must continue to maintain good old traditions, not eliminate them altogether.

Conclusion

The shifting in the implementation of the eid prayers in Sungai Landia initiated by the village head together with local clerics and traditional leaders, by abolishing women’s rights to become imam and khatib do not necessarily eliminate the progressive sides of Sungai Landia women. The process of changing to a conservative Islamic practice, by returning to the rules based on the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW, was carried out carefully by the policy holders there. Religious studies that specifically discuss fiqh provisions regarding eid prayers were carried out before these changes occurred, besides always socializing that the old tradition was not fully in accordance with fiqh provisions. The community began to realize their mistake because of the criticism from the younger generations in Sungai Landia who had received higher
religious education, seperti Asrul, alumni Madarah Sumatra Tawalib dan Anna Fadilla, and they tried to rectify this practice so that it complies with the provisions of fiqh. These criticisms were not only from the local younger generation, but also from lecturers who were invited to give religious lectures. After the knowledge given to the community was sufficient, the shift was carried out by returning to conservative fiqh which was marked by the abolition of women’s rights to become imams and khatibs of the eid prayer. In general, the reaction of the Sungai Landia women did not show significant resistance, they accepted on condition that the implementation of the eid prayer must still be separated between male and female worshipers even at different mosques in the village, though the imam and khatib are men. Progressive sides are still being maintained by public recognition of women being separated from men in the implementation of the eid prayer.

This paper has been able to show a different side from previous studies regarding female imam and khatib in the eid prayers. This paper also has limitations in terms of the number of informants who do not involve the views of scholars outside Sungai Landia and because there are no more initial figures in the history of this tradition. Research with the same theme is still widely open for other researchers with more number of informants and with different research objectives and questions.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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