

Religious Moderation Education Strategy at the Mualaf Assembly

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Abstract

This article describes the religious moderation education strategy and its implications at the Manado branch of the North Sulawesi Converts Association. The research that has been used is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The data collection techniques in this research are through observation, interview, and documentation. The important finding of this article is that the strategy of Religious Moderation Education at the North Sulawesi Converts Assembly Manado City Branch departs from the discussion of research results and the theory of David Hunger and Thomas L Whelen, which has several stages in strategy: the first stage, Strategy Formulation, the second stage, Strategy Implementation, Strategy, and the third stage, Strategy Evaluation. The Implication of the Religious Moderation Education Strategy at the North Sulawesi Mualaf Council Manado City Branch is based on the discussion of research results and the theory of Fethullah Gulen, which has several stages in Moderation Education: the first stage, Golden Generation, the second stage, Love and Tolerance, and the third stage, *Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin*.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi pendidikan moderasi beragama dan implikasinya pada majelis mualaf sulawesi utara cabang kota Manado. Penelitian yang telah digunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Adapun teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini melalui proses observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Temuan penting dari artikel ini adalah strategi Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Pada Majelis Mualaf Sulawesi Utara Cabang Kota Manado berangkat dari diskusi hasil penelitian dan teori dari David Hunger dan Thomas L, Whelen yang memiliki beberapa tahap dalam strategi: tahap pertama, Strategy Formulation, tahap kedua, Strategy Implementation, Strategi, dan tahap ketiga, Strategy Evaluation. Sedangkan Implikasi Strategi Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Pada Majelis Mualaf Sulawesi Utara Cabang Kota Manado yaitu berangkat dari diskusi hasil penelitian dan teori dari Fathullah Gulen yang memiliki beberapa tahap dalam Pendidikan Moderasi: tahap pertama, Golden Generation, tahap kedua, Love and Tolerance, dan tahap ketiga, *Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin*.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the largest Islamic countries in the world. Muslims in Indonesia, according to the Islamic Studies Center titled *The Muslim 500* edition 2022, amounted to 231.06 Muslim Indonesians and is expected to continue to grow even larger. Although Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is also one of the countries that prioritizes the values of tolerance between religious communities. Indonesia consists of 37 provinces and 6 recognized religions, namely Islam, Catholic Christianity, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism (Anwar, 2021; Arifin, Sutarna, Aryani, Prayitno, & Waston, 2023; Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022). Because Muslims are the majority in Indonesia, therefore Muslims must also fortify from doctrine or extreme, radical, and terrorist issues that are accused of Muslims to divide between religious communities and will have an impact on the Indonesian state (Ali, Afwadzi, Abdullah, & Mukmin, 2021; Latif & Hafid, 2021).

Every religion teaches Moderation, even though the word has different terms. The term moderation in Islam is "*rahmatan li al-alamin*", which means compassion for all nature; in Christianity, it is called "love", and in Buddhism, it is called "*saraniyadhamma*", which means compassion. (Hasan, Azizah, & Rozaq, 2023; Subchi, Zulkifli, Latifa, & Sa'diyah, 2022) Muslims must ground the ideas of religious Moderation and must try to dismiss accusations that Muslims are one of the religions that cause division (Hefner, 2011). Religious moderation education has existed for a long time. Still, it has only been grounded and determined by the Minister of Religion, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, has decided 2019 as the year of religious Moderation of the Ministry of Religion and at the same time, the United Nations also set 2019 as the International Year of Moderation (Aprilianto, Rofiq, Sirojuddin, Muchtar, & Mumtahana, 2023; Ibrahim, Prasajo, & Sulaiman, 2019). Of course, this is grounded in the pressure on the followers of Islam itself, such as some accusations that Islam is a religion that teaches terrorism, radicalism, extremism and primitiveness.

Some previous research has explained a lot, starting from Toto (Suharto, 2017), demonstrating that religious moderation needs to be developed early in the educational environment. Many studies state that the guardians of religious moderation from radicalism in Indonesia are Nahdatul Ulama and Muhamamadiyah (Aisyah, Ilmi, Rosyid, Wulandari, & Akhmad, 2022; Arifianto, 2021; Baidhawiy, 2015; Syahnan, Ja'far, & Iqbal, 2021). Religious moderation education efforts have been seen from research or journal articles: Made (Saihu, 2021) research entitled *Religious Moderation Education: A Study of Wasathiyah Islam According to Nurcholish Madjid* by exploring the wasathiyah perspective of Nurcholish Madjid. Edi (Nurhidin, 2021) entitled *The Implementation Strategy of M. Quraish Shihab's Religious Moderation in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education*. Muhammad (Abror, 2020) titled *Religious Moderation in the Frame of Tolerance of Islamic Studies and Diversity, namely Exploring Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Tolerance*.

This research will examine the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado branch of the North Sulawesi Muslim Brotherhood by using the theory of David Hunger and Thomas L, Whelen which has several stages, namely formulation, implementation, and evaluation as an analysis knife of the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado

Branch of the North Sulawesi Muslim Brotherhood. After that, the researcher will analyze the implications of the spiritual moderation education strategy at the North Sulawesi *Mualaf* Council Manado City Branch with the theory of Fethullah Gullen, namely the golden generation, love and tolerance, Islam rahmatan lil alamin (Islam that is compassionate to the entire universe) as an analysis knife. as well as supporting and inhibiting factors.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, which describes the events that occur in the field and reveals back through the data encountered. The function of phenomenological research is to explain and demonstrate the meaning of concepts or phenomena based on the awareness of several people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method makes it easier for researchers to be more subjective to the events under study. Researchers conducted this research at the North Sulawesi Mualaf Council Manado City Branch at the Ahmad Yani Grand Mosque. The association is only devoted to those converted to Islam by coaching them on Islamic religious knowledge to strengthen their faith in Islam. In this research, researchers have built communication with several coaches and members of this assembly.

Data and sources obtained in this research are descriptive, actions, documentation, words and others. As for the data sources sourced from humans, researchers will interview the chairman, coaches, administrators, and members of the North Sulawesi Mualaf Council Manado City Branch. Data from non-human sources, namely researchers, will be collected through documentation.

Researchers use phenomenological data analysis, which has several stages: The initial stage of the researcher will describe all the phenomena experienced in the research subject by transcribing the recorded interviews into written language; in the Horizontalization Stage, the researcher will collect data related to important statements from the transcripts related to the research to be examined, Cluster Of Meaning stage, the researcher will classify into units of meaning to separate overlapping or repetitive statements, and at this stage, the textural description and structural description are carried out, the essence description stage, the researcher will build a comprehensive description of the meaning and essence of the subject's experience, the researcher stage reports the results of his research to signal a good understanding to the reader about how someone experiences a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Result and Discussion

Result

Religious Moderation Education Strategy in Manado City Mualaf Assembly

Educational strategy is a plan that is structured and has substance about a concept of activities that have been designed as a tool to achieve educational goals, because if education is not based on a strategy it will have an impact on the stability of education that tends to be undirected. Especially in this case to conceptualize a religious moderation education strategy for converts who live in a Muslim minority area, namely the city of Manado, North Sulawesi,

which often causes inter-religious sensitivity if not fostered by the maturity of a religious moderation education strategy.

Based on an interview with Dr. Delli Sabudu, the chairman of MMS Manado City Branch about the religious moderation education strategy at MMS Manado City Branch said: "When the converts migrate to Islam, no one provides special guidance either from the person who made the martyrdom or the priest and BTM in the neighborhood where they live. So this is the space for us to build a container and accommodate them to be fostered. This includes guidance on faith, training in reading and writing the Qur'an, and so on according to the religion they have adopted." (Interview: 2023: Delli Sabudu).

The most needed thing in such a position is a place to accommodate converts and then foster by strengthening their faith so that they do not return to their original religion or not make fun of their previous religion by teaching them to read and write the Koran and the teachings of the religion they have adopted.

Delli Sabudu, also added that in the provision of places and facilities in North Sulawesi itself, Islam is a minority, so the space for movement is limited. But if they are in one place we can facilitate. By providing sources of information and learning, they can be directly fostered in one place. They are not scattered in their respective areas where they are sometimes embarrassed to join the Ta'lim Assembly in their neighborhood mosque due to limited knowledge.

Infrastructure facilities are no less important, especially in the learning and recitation process, they need a safe and comfortable place and easy access to be found in the Paal 2 area, Mapanget, Singkil, Tikala, Pandu, and the Wanea area is still centered at the Ahmad Yani Grand Mosque, Manado City. MMS Manado City Branch is also selective in selecting teachers, and as one of the strategies of the Manado City Branch MMS management, they have a NU background. This is in line with what was conveyed by Ustadzah Rahmawaty, M.H.I am the head of the education and da'wah field of MMS Manado City Branch. "So far I am also from Fatayat and Muslimat NU so most of the MMS are NU Muslimat people. And most of the traditions carried out are more directed to NU such as *tahlilan* and so on." (Interview: Rahmawaty: 2023).

In the process of fostering converts, the administrators also facilitate teachers who are Nahdatul Ulama (NU) with the aim that what is taught does not deviate and is extreme. Because educators with NU backgrounds cannot be doubted about the quality of moderation in religion. This is confirmed by what was conveyed by the chairman of the Manado City Branch of MMS, Dr. Delli Sabudu, S.Pd., M.A.

'NU colors MMS itself because our advisor, Ustadz Yaser Bachmid, is Rais PCNU Manado City and Chairman of MUI Manado City. I am also the secretary of Muslimat NU. But Muhammadiyah itself is also in it because one of the founders, the late H. Yusuf Otoluwa, had Muhammadiyah background. So, I made a mix of NU spirit and Muhammadiyah spirit. So converts need these 2 spirits. And for presenters, we are very selective, not arbitrarily. If there is a speaker from outside, we must first confirm with our coach, Ustadz Yaser Bachmid, before he can present the material at MMS. As mentioned, these converts are still easy to doctrine, so I am very careful giving the speaker. However, some say why the speakers are picky people. And I said that it must be chosen because it

is about doctrine. When being brainwashed, we must know who is indoctrinating so that these converts can get the appropriate knowledge and not enter the realm of intolerant radicalism.”

The above statement reaffirms that the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado branch of the North Sulawesi converts assembly has been neatly arranged from various angles. Such as place facilities, infrastructure, materials, and educators to make converts to *kaffah* Islam and uphold moderation in religion.

Implication of Religious Moderation Education Strategy in Manado City Mualaf Assembly

The implications of the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado branch of the North Sulawesi Converts Association from the results of interviews with several members of the Manado branch of MMS, namely Mrs. Mike Saune explained: "*Got a lot of friends, fiqh knowledge and Alhamdulillah already in the Qur'an.*" (Interview: Mike: 2023)

Following the Manado city branch of MMS allows converts to learn religious knowledge easily. They are not embarrassed when in the learning process because they have converts who are both still in the process of understanding Islam. This action is also in line with the response from Mrs. Crystie Lihawa as a member: "*I am happy and satisfied because I can learn fiqh, read and write the Quran, and at the age of 33 I have reached the iqro' six stage.*" (Interview: Crystie Lihawa: 2023)

This moderation is in line with what is said in the hadith, which is to pursue knowledge from the cradle to the grave. There is one member of MMS Manado City Branch who is very interesting when telling her experience when joining MMS interviewed, namely Mrs. Orpa Lusye Oli:

"There are so many, especially since I live in a Christian neighborhood. So before knowing MMS, I didn't wear the hijab, and after joining MMS, I was very embarrassed if I didn't wear the hijab, especially when I met friends on the street. Although not completely perfect, at least I have a sense of shame if I leave the house not wearing the hijab. Secondly, many studies have yet to be done, so I know, for example, about Prayer. I already know if it's just moving, moments like that, but the laws I know later at MMS. At MMS, I gained self-confidence by wearing Muslim clothes because I used to feel very shy if I wore long dresses, but after being at MMS, I felt confident and made many Muslim friends.' (Interview: Orpa Lusye; 2023)

It can be concluded that the implications of the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado branch of the North Sulawesi converts assembly are able to bring positive values to converts and the general public.

The following are the results of moderate education strategies in the Manado city converts assembly.

Table 1. Moderate education strategies in the Manado city converts assembly

Formulation Strategy	Activity
This stage is to formulate the factors that determine the vision and mission, planning, strategic objectives, and analysis of the internal or external environment.	<i>First, facilitating an organization called MMS (Majelis Mualaf Sulawesi Utara) along with the management structure and vision and mission of the organization. Second, facilitating the place, namely at the Ahmad Yani grand mosque in Manado city, North Sulawesi Province.</i>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Implementation Strategy</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activity</i></p>
<p>The process stage implements strategies and policies through structure and program policies.</p>	<p><i>Third, facilitating TPQ specifically for MMS. Fourth, facilitating materials on akidah, fiqh, and reading and writing the Koran. Fifth, facilitating seminars on religious moderation. Sixth, facilitating teacher educators.</i></p> <p>Organizing routine activities every 2 weeks. Starting from 08.00 - 10.00 a.m. there is reading and writing of the Qur'an, then at 10.00 a.m. until before the dzuhur prayer the activities of strengthening the creed which are filled by Islamic institutions, community leaders, religious shops and administrators of the North Sulawesi Muallaf Council Manado City Branch.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Evaluation Strategy</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activity</i></p>
<p>Strategy evaluation is the final stage, which reviews internal and external factors as a basis for the implemented strategy, measures performance, and takes corrective action.</p>	<p>First, teaching prayers over and over again. Second, teaching the recitation of short surahs once every 2 weeks. Third, repeating the material taught once every 2 weeks. Thirdly, continuous doctrine that the 5 daily prayers are obligatory.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Golden Generation Implications</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activity</i></p>
<p>To become a golden generation that is able to practice religious values thoroughly and strive to become a perfect human being.</p>	<p>The Golden Generation, which focuses on strengthening the faith, developing the potential of Muslims, especially converts to Islam, is more qualified, has a role for the ummah in an effort to lead a reliable society.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Love and Tolerance Implications</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activity</i></p>
<p>To do service, it must be based on love and tolerance. Because love is the basis and end of education</p>	<p>Love and Tolerance is able to provide understanding to non-Muslim families in order to be able to accept the situation of converts to Islam well, the speakers must be selected in advance so that they can convey important messages of religious moderation to maintain the stability of tolerance, teach about sincerity and maintain good relations between people.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin Implications</i></p> <p>Love for others, ethics, and moral goodness are daily behaviors that create a harmonious atmosphere.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Activity</i></p> <p>Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin (Islam that is compassionate for all nature, namely maintaining good relations with previous non-Muslim families and maintaining morals as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.</p>

Discussion

From the results of the researcher's findings about the religious moderation education strategy at the Manado city branch of MMS North Sulawesi, the researcher will discuss it with the theory of David Hunger and Thomas L. Whelen which has three stages: First, Strategy Formulation, namely Facilitating an organizational forum called MMS (North Sulawesi Mualaf Council) along with the management structure and vision and mission of the organization, Facilitating TPQ specifically for MMS, Facilitating materials on Aqeeda, fiqh, and reading and writing the Koran, facilitating seminars on religious moderation, facilitating teacher educators. Second, Strategy Implementation, namely by holding routine activities every 2 weeks. Starting from 08.00-10.00 a.m., there is reading and writing the Qur'an, then at 10.00 a.m. until before the dzuhur prayer, the activity of strengthening the creed, which is filled by Islamic institutions, community leaders, religious shops, and administrators of the North Sulawesi Mualaf Assembly Manado City Branch. Third, strategy evaluation, namely by teaching prayers repeatedly, teaching recitation of short surahs once every 2 weeks, repeating every material taught once every 2, and continuing the doctrine that the 5 daily prayers are mandatory.

This moderation strategy is relevant to the theory that researchers use in research departing from the theory of David (Hunger & Wheelen, 1996) strategy is a collection of regular decisions and actions that will determine organizational performance in the long term. Strategic arrangements include environmental observation, strategy formulation, strategic or long-term planning, strategy implementation, and evaluation and control.

If the following actions are taken, the strategy will be successfully implemented: *The first* stage of the formulation is to discuss the factors that determine the vision and mission, planning, and strategic objectives, as well as the analysis of the internal and external environment (Atstsaury, Hadiyanto, & Supian, 2024). The process of preparing the way forward, which is to build a vision and mission, strategic goals, and strategies to achieve these goals to provide the best value to customers, is called strategy formulation (Coelho, Mojtahedi, Kabirifar, & Yazdani, 2022).

The second stage, implementing strategies and policies through creating structures and programs, is called strategy implementation. Implementation procedures and budgeting (Mukminiin et al., 2019). System execution is the most troublesome stage in the engineering cycle, given the many variables that can affect execution on the ground and may not match the underlying evaluation (Genareo, 2022). For a strategy to be implemented successfully, it must be ridden by a quality organization with strong leaders, adequate resource allocation, and the right policies, culture, and conditions.

The third stage, Evaluation, is the last stage of vital administration. The following three activities are central to strategy evaluation: Examining internal and external factors as a foundation for the strategy being implemented, Measuring performance, and Taking corrective action.

While the implications of the religious moderation education strategy at the North Sulawesi Mualaf Council Manado City Branch have been implemented effectively, this is evidenced by the realization of First, Golden Generation, which focuses on strengthening the creed, developing the potential of Muslims, especially converts to be more qualified, having an important role for the people to lead a reliable society (Rokhman, Hum, Syaifudin, &

Yuliati, 2014). Second, Love and Tolerance, which can provide understanding to non-Muslim families so that they still accept the situation of converts to Islam well; the speakers must be selected in advance so that they can convey important messages of religious moderation to maintain the stability of tolerance, teach about sincerity and maintain good relations between people (Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Maarif, Muarofah, Sianipar, Hariyadi, & Kausar, 2023). Third. Islam *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* maintains good relations with previous non-Muslim families, maintaining morals as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad.

The researcher has reviewed the discussion of the results that the researcher has described above, so the researcher can dialogue it with Fathullah Gulen's theory of moderation education which will have an impact on the practice of tolerance if we are able to actualize his theory of education to instill tolerance in the world of education as follows (Nazihah & Maulana, 2020):

The first stage of the Golden Generation is a person who can practice religious values thoroughly and strive to be a perfect human being. The generation to be formed by Gülen carries out all its routines with love, so the ultimate vision of Gülen's educational concept is to develop a golden generation, a generation of ideal universal human beings. These human beings love the truth, can connect spirituality and knowledge, and work to benefit society. "The end of Gülen's educational vision is to raise a "Golden Generation," a generation of ideal universal individuals, individuals who love truth, who integrate spirituality and knowledge, who work to benefit society".

The third stage of Islam is *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* Democracy and Moderation Islam, in which a group sees people as old, fundamental, and terrorist. Gülen dismisses this tolerance that Islam is a religion that is not like that. Gülen calls for people who do not know Islam well to understand the verses of jihad correctly; then, that person is classified as exclusive and can be intolerant. Gulen was among the first to denounce the September 11 tragedy in the United States because the real face of Islam is not like that. Islam is peaceful, rahmatan lil alamin and moderate. One of Gulen's moderators is integrating Islamic education into the modern world. This condition is to make people understand the importance of combining science and religious knowledge so that people's understanding is not shackled by materialism, capitalism, communism, and other understandings that make humans prioritize momentary needs. Therefore, education is the main element that makes people moderate, form a democratic country, and understand Islam (Davids, 2017).

Preventing radicalism in converts' assemblies involves several preventive, educational, and community-building strategies. Some strategies can be implemented: (1) Ensure that the religious education delivered in converts' assemblies is moderate, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. (2) Emphasize the universal values of tolerance, peace, and understanding. (3) Provide training to members of converts' assemblies in developing critical thinking skills (Alam, 2020; Ma'arif, Rusydi, Hali, & Rohmah, 2023; Marzuki, Miftahuddin, & Murdiono, 2020).

This helps them to evaluate information objectively and avoid getting caught up in radical narratives. Facilitate discussions and programs that explore understanding of diversity within Islam and among humanity in general. Encourage tolerance and respect for differences. Build bridges with other religious communities. Interfaith meetings can help reduce misunderstandings and open opportunities for constructive dialog. Involve the

community in positive activities such as social services, humanitarian projects and other charitable activities (Mahfud et al., 2021). This helps build a sense of social responsibility and engages community members in positive activities. Pay attention to the mental and emotional well-being of assembly members (Kohlberg, 1966). Mentoring and psychological support programs can help prevent the radicalization process. Utilize technology to spread moderate education. Online platforms, webinars, and digital resources can be used to reach more people with radicalism prevention messages.

Keep an eye on online content that may trigger radicalization. Support assembly members in using social media wisely and responding to potential negative influences. Establish partnerships with security authorities to exchange information and work together to prevent radicalization. Islamic moderation may include reporting suspicious activity. Identify and support leaders who promote moderate and inclusive values within the assembly. Strong leaders have great potential to shape the views of the group (Ma`arif, Rofiq, & Sirojuddin, 2022).

It is important to remember that radicalism prevention requires a holistic and sustainable approach. If implemented consistently and collaboratively, a combination of the above strategies can help create an environment in converts' assemblies free from radical ideologies.

The supporting factors for the religious moderation education strategy at the North Sulawesi Muallaf Assembly Manado City Branch are being able to carry out habituation to attract each other between MMS in maximizing active participation in coaching activities that have been facilitated by MMS such as learning to pray, learning to read and write the Quran which has been provided by TPQ specifically for converts, and khataman Alquran. The inhibiting factor for the religious moderation education strategy at the North Sulawesi Muallaf Council Manado City Branch lies in the environment where the MMS lives, which is donated by non-Muslims. Both the internal family and external environment.

MMS supporting factors lie in the good facilities, facilities, TPQ, and the cohesiveness of fellow MMS in the coaching process in the form of strengthening the creed, reading and writing the Koran, fiqh, and studies of moderation in religion. The inhibiting factor lies in the environment or residence of each convert, namely the Muslim minority area.

CONCLUSION

North Sulawesi is an area where the majority of the population is Christian. The background of the establishment of Majelis Muallaf Sulawesi (MMS) is that after they convert to Islam, they need to be specifically nurtured, and there is sensitivity between families. In addition, there is no Islamic organization that thinks about the welfare of converts. So, MMS is present as a home and protector for converts, especially in Manado City. With the presence of MMS, they are coached to strengthen their creed, fiqh, reading and writing the Qur'an and so on. Religious shops carry out coaching, most of which have NU backgrounds. The religious leaders have also been selected by the North Sulawesi Muallaf Council Board, which, on average, also has an NU background. In addition to conducting spiritual coaching, religious moderation education is also carried out. The results of MMS coaching for converts are that they can read and write the Qur'an, recite prayers, perform the 5 daily prayers, cover the *aurat*, and are always active in religious and community activities. The spiritual moderation

education strategy implemented by MMS succeeded in producing qualified converts and implementing tolerance between religious communities.

This study is limited to the place, namely only conducting research in one of the branches, age and mostly from older people and gender because only women participate in MMS activities. The broader research at the Provincial MMS level will produce a more varied sample. It is hoped that this research can be a reference for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to pay attention to the fate of converts by providing a special place in religious guidance, like the North Sulawesi Mualaf Council (MMS) as a mecca that accommodates, fosters and protects converts.

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