

IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE INDICATOR OF LOCAL CULTURE'S ACCEPTANCE TOWARDS BANTENGAN CULTURE IN POLOWIJEN

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Abstract - Indonesia as a multicultural country, often faces challenges in maintaining social balance amidst diverse cultures and religions. Religious moderation, as a key pillar in creating a harmonious society, must involve national commitment, tolerance, an anti-violence stance, and acceptance of local culture. This study focuses on the implementation of religious moderation in the context of local cultural acceptance by examining the Bantengan art form in Polowijen, Malang City. Bantengan is a traditional performance art that combines elements of dance, martial arts, music, and chants with a strong magical ambiance. The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach using descriptive qualitative methods and literature review. The subject of the study is the community in Polowijen. Data collection techniques involve interviews and literature review. The data obtained from these methods will be analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. The findings indicate that the presence of Bantengan reflects a significant acceptance and appreciation of local cultural heritage in harmony with religious values. This study contributes to the understanding of how religious moderation can maintain a balance between cultural preservation and religious practices in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Bantengan, Local Culture, Religious Moderation

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a multicultural country with diverse cultures and religions, often faces challenges in maintaining social balance. One example of a religious moderation violation of concern occurred in 2019 in Garut Regency, West Java. This incident involved a group of people engaging in violent actions against another group deemed different in terms of religion and culture. The violence was triggered by the belief that the traditions practiced by the targeted group deviated from the teachings of the majority religion, leading to fear and insecurity in the community (Nasution & Aziz, 2021).

This incident illustrates the vulnerability of Indonesian society to conflicts rooted in ignorance, prejudice, and intolerance, which can threaten national unity. The events in Garut are just one example among many cases of religious moderation violations in Indonesia. This highlights the importance of applying religious moderation as a concept to prevent and resolve conflicts based on religion and culture. Religious moderation involves not just tolerance but also a stance of mutual respect, understanding, and support among different religious groups in a pluralistic society (Amiruddin, 2020).

In Indonesia, religious moderation is a key pillar in creating a harmonious and peaceful society. The government, through various agencies, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs, continues to promote the importance of religious moderation to maintain national unity (Haryanto, 2023). Religious moderation represents a middle path that avoids extremism and exclusivism in religious and social life. It is hoped that through religious moderation, each individual can practice their beliefs without neglecting or demeaning the beliefs of others (Rahman, 2021).

There are several key indicators that need to be understood and applied in religious moderation, including:

1. National Commitment

First, national commitment is an indicator that shows awareness that religious life should strengthen a sense of nationalism and love for the homeland. This means that religious practices should not divide society or create discord (Fauzan, 2021).

2. Tolerance

Tolerance is the attitude of valuing and respecting differences, both in religion and culture. Tolerance promotes an inclusive stance and avoids any form of discrimination against other groups (Santoso, 2021).

3. Anti-Violence

Anti-violence is an indicator that emphasizes the importance of resolving differences and conflicts through peaceful means, without resorting to violence. This means that differing views or beliefs should not be used as a justification for violent actions (Iskandar, 2023).

4. Acceptance of Local Culture

Acceptance of local culture is an indicator that shows how religious teachings can adapt and engage with local cultures without losing their essence and meaning. This is important for preserving local cultures, which are a part of the national identity (Mulyadi, 2021).

In Polowijen, Malang, the Bantengan tradition serves as a tangible example of the application of religious moderation within the context of local culture. Bantengan, as a local cultural heritage, is often viewed as controversial by some groups who see it from a rigid religious perspective (Setiawan, 2022). Without an understanding of religious moderation, particularly regarding the indicator of acceptance of local culture, this tradition could be seen as a source of tension between groups. However, through a religious moderation approach, the Bantengan tradition can be accepted and valued as part of the local identity that enriches Indonesia's diversity (Amiruddin, 2020).

Polowijen, a village in Malang City, is an example where local traditions such as Bantengan are still alive and respected by the community. This tradition reflects local wisdom that requires adjustment to the practices of the majority religion in Indonesia, Islam (Rohman, 2020).

In the context of globalization and modernization, maintaining a balance between preserving local culture and fulfilling religious obligations is becoming an increasingly complex challenge (Mulyadi, 2021). Through the approach of religious moderation, this tradition can continue to be preserved without causing conflicts with the religious values held by the local community (Rahayu, 2021). This research aims to explore and analyze how religious moderation is applied in Polowijen in the context of accepting the Bantengan culture, specifically regarding the implementation of the religious moderation indicator on the fourth point, which is the acceptance of Bantengan local culture within a diverse society. The goal of this study is to examine and analyze the implementation of religious moderation concerning the acceptance of local culture towards Bantengan in Polowijen.

2. METHOD

A. Type of Research

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative method and literature study. This approach is chosen to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of religious moderation in the context of local cultural acceptance of the Bantengan tradition in Polowijen. According to Sugiyono (2007: 1), qualitative research is used to study natural objects where the researcher is a key instrument, data collection techniques are combined, data analysis is inductive, and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. A literature study involves a series of actions related to managing research materials, reading and noting bibliographic materials, and collecting data (Mestika, 2008:3). After determining the research topic and formulating the research problem, the researcher conducted this literature study before going into the field to collect data (Darmadi, 2011). This research is a literature study aimed at analyzing the implementation of religious moderation in the context of local cultural acceptance of the Bantengan tradition in Polowijen. The research subject in this study is the community of the Polowijen sub-district. The research was conducted during the Community Service Program (KKN) in the Polowijen sub-district. The duration of this activity was 45 days.

B. Data Collection Techniques

1. Interviews

Structured Interviews is Using a pre-prepared interview guide to gather information on:

- Community perceptions of Bantengan as part of local culture.
- The role of religion in the organization of Bantengan.
- Challenges in implementing religious moderation in the context of Bantengan.
- Efforts made to achieve religious moderation.

Unstructured Interviews is Providing opportunities for informants to share information more freely and in greater depth.

2. Literature Review

- Literature on Religious Moderation: Examining the concept of religious moderation, its indicators, and its implementation within the context of local culture.
- Literature on Bantengan Culture: Analyzing the history, meaning, and values embedded in the Bantengan tradition.
- Literature on Similar Case Studies: Comparing the findings of this research with previous studies to enrich the analysis.

C. Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from interviews and literature review will be analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which include:

- Data Reduction: Organizing, selecting, and simplifying relevant data.
- Data Presentation: Presenting data in narrative form, tables, or diagrams to facilitate understanding.
- Conclusion Drawing: Drawing conclusions based on the findings obtained from data analysis.

D. Research Procedures

The procedures for this literature study include the following stages:

1. Topic Determination Stage

In this first stage, the researcher identifies the research subject to be studied. In this research, the chosen subject is "The Implementation of Religious Moderation in the Context of Local Cultural Acceptance of Bantengan in Polowijen".

2. Data Collection Stage

In this second stage, the researcher collects data about the research subject, including interviews, theories, concepts, and research findings. This data is gathered from various sources, such as books, journals, and research reports.

3. Data Analysis Stage

In the third stage, the researcher analyzes the collected data by organizing it, examining relationships, and drawing conclusions.

4. Report Writing Stage

In the final stage, the researcher writes the research report. The report includes the results and discussion, research conclusions, and recommendations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Religious Moderation

Moderate Islam or *Islam Wasathiyah* is derived from two words: Islam and Wasathiyah. As is known, Islam is a blessed religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. *Wasathiyah* in this context is referred to as moderation. Linguistically, **al-wasathiyah* comes from the word "wasath," which means middle or between (Ahmad Warson Munawwir, 2020). In practical terms, the moderate or middle path in Islam can be classified into four main discussions (Mohammad Fahri and Ahmad Zainuri, 2019).

1. Moderation in matters of belief
2. Moderation in matters of worship
3. Moderation in matters of behavior and ethics
4. Moderation in the formation of legislation (development of Sharia)

According to Quraish Shihab, religious moderation has three important pillars, which are as follows:

First, the Pillar of Justice. Justice in this context has multiple meanings, including "equality" in rights. Justice also means placing something in its appropriate place. Additionally, it is interpreted as giving to those who are entitled to it.

Second, the Pillar of Balance, which refers to a balance found within a group that contains various parts working towards a common goal. Balance does not require equal proportions and conditions for all units to be balanced. In his interpretation, Quraish Shihab states that balance is a fundamental principle of *wasathiyah*. Without balance, justice cannot be achieved.

Third, the Pillar of Tolerance. Quraish Shihab also explains that tolerance is the measure for additions or reductions that are still acceptable. In summary, tolerance is the permissible deviation.

According to Yusuf Qardhawi, *wasathiyah* (moderate understanding) is one of the characteristics of Islam that is not possessed by other ideologies. As explained in QS. Al-Baqarah, verse 143: **وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا**

Meaning: "And thus We have made you a just community."

In the context of Indonesia, which implements *Ummatan Wasathan* through two major organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, both reflect the teachings of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah*, which acknowledges tolerance and peace in preaching. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) recognizes four schools of thought: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali. NU also adheres to the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah* doctrine pioneered by Imam Abu Hasan Al-Ash'ari and Imam Abu Mansur AlMaturidi.

A person can be considered moderate in their religion when they possess four qualities, namely: (Lukman Hakim S, 2019)

First, National Commitment. This involves accepting the fundamental principles of the state, such as Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, as guidelines for life. National commitment is feasible because Pancasila itself does not contradict Islamic values. A Muslim should have a sense of patriotism; it is even said that "Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman" (Love of the homeland is part of faith). Simple

examples of this indicator include participating in the national flag ceremony held every Monday at school, singing the national anthem "Indonesia Raya," and reciting the Pancasila text.

Second, Tolerance. A person must have a tolerant attitude, as differences are inevitable in the world. In the context of religious moderation, tolerance means respecting the beliefs and opinions of others who differ from our own. Interfaith tolerance involves respecting people of other religions, even if they are a minority. Tolerance among Muslims can be demonstrated by respecting and honoring other groups with differing opinions, as long as they have a valid foundation in their religious beliefs. For instance, if we have friends from different religions, ethnicities, or races, we should not belittle them for their differences; instead, we should mutually respect those differences.

Third, Anti-Violence. Violence is an unacceptable method as it infringes on the rights of others. The anti-violence stance in religious moderation means rejecting all forms of violence conducted on any basis, especially under the guise of religion. Acts of violence carried out in the name of religion are widespread among individuals from various religions, such as colonialism, terrorism, defamation of other religions, insulting other religions, disrupting the worship activities of other religions, and more.

Fourth, Acceptance of Local Culture. Local culture can be accepted as art/diversity as long as it embodies good values and does not contain elements of harm. In the context of religious moderation, acceptable culture is that which contains good values aligned with Islam and does not include elements of shirk (associating partners with Allah) or other aspects prohibited by Islam.

Acceptance of Local Culture

Essentially, culture encompasses values that are inherited and evolve alongside social changes within a society. Culture is also closely related to religiosity, where the values contained reflect the interaction between society and culture. This helps to shape a cultured and civilized society. Religion and culture are distinct entities but have a relationship that can result in both harmony and conflict. Neither can be disregarded, as the interaction between religion and culture generates diverse symbols, patterns, and meanings. Despite this, tensions often arise in society when culture is perceived as being at odds with religious norms, particularly in Islam (Anifatul Kiftiyah, 2023).

The spread of Islam in Indonesia during the era of the Wali Songo (Nine Saints) is a clear example of cultural acculturation. Through culture, Islam was introduced to Indonesian society with an emphasis on tolerance, equality, and the acceptance of local cultures, allowing Islamic values to be embraced by the community. The relationship between the two is such that religion can disseminate its teachings through culture, and culture needs religion to sustain itself. A harmonious relationship between religion and culture prioritizes togetherness and mutual love.

The term "culture" comes from the Sanskrit word "buddhayah," the plural form of "buddhi," which relates to human intellect. The diversity of Indonesian society in terms of religion and culture is a natural phenomenon that has existed

since ancient times. Differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and social groups are realities that should be leveraged to advance the nation and its people. These differences can enhance life both individually and collectively.

Culture in Indonesia is very diverse, especially its local cultures. It is not surprising that many people, from the younger generation to the older, are involved in preserving local culture, one example being the Bantengan community. Bantengan art, also referred to as "Mberot," is a traditional dance from East Java that mimics the movements of the bull, an animal considered sacred by the Javanese. This art form is a cultural heritage with high cultural value and rich history. It is also open to everyone, regardless of gender, from children to adults (Azzahra Devita and Salsa Dewi, 2024).

Bantengan Culture

Bantengan is an intriguing topic in the discussion of traditional art from East Java. Originating from the Malang region, this art form features a bull's head used attractively as an entertainment medium. Bantengan has deep and complex historical roots that reflect the rich cultural heritage of the area. It is believed to have originated from the reliefs at the Jago/Jajaghu Temple in Tumpang, East Java, and has traces that can be found in the Kunjakarta stories (Utami & Cindrakasih, 2023). To understand this art form more deeply, one needs to look at how Bantengan is adapted and practiced in the daily life of the local community. This tradition not only preserves its historical elements but also adapts to the needs and context of contemporary culture.

In evolving societies, Bantengan art is often closely linked with the study of martial arts and pencak silat. This art form is deeply ingrained in rural communities and continues to be an integral part of communal performances in East Java (Utami & Cindrakasih, 2023). However, the existence of Bantengan art faces challenges due to a lack of generational transfer or regeneration. Additionally, advancements in information technology have significantly impacted the sustainability of this art form (Fadeli, Alfraita, & Wibowo, 2023).

Bantengan is also a traditional performance art that combines elements of dance, martial arts, music, and chants, imbued with a strong magical ambiance. An interesting aspect of Bantengan tradition is when performers, dressed in bull costumes, enter a trance or possession state, believed to be the spirit of the bull. Symbolically, the depiction of tigers and bulls is used because these two animals represent forest rulers.

The goal of Bantengan art is to gather and unite people, especially the youth, to avoid engaging in harmful behaviors. This objective aligns with the third principle of Pancasila, "Unity in Indonesia," and the philosophy of Bantengan itself. From various aspects such as economic, health, social, and religious, Bantengan encompasses all. Socially, Bantengan brings together people with an artistic spirit to participate in the art form. Members of the Bantengan community also get to know each other and expand their friendships. Religiously, Bantengan is linked with rituals and religious activities such as group prayers, tahlilan, yasinan, and

recitations, with the Rogo Wilis Community requiring its members to be proficient in recitations. Economically, Bantengan events positively impact the community's economy, as vendors sell goods during the events, providing entertainment and refreshments for the audience. Health-wise, Bantengan also involves pencak silat movements, which can function as exercise.

Preserving a culture requires the involvement of multiple parties, not just one or a few. All elements of society must contribute and participate in this effort. One village in Malang, Polowijen in Blimbing District, is organizing an event over five days, from July 11, 12, 28, and August 3 and 4, 2024, titled "Bersih Desa Kelurahan Polowijen 2024." The event series involves community participation in activities such as group prayers, ancestral blessings, cultural parades and carnivals, performing arts, and general recitations. The cultural parade during the carnival is highly anticipated by the community, showcasing various cultures, including Bantengan.

Implementation of Bantengan Culture in Polowijen

Polowijen is one of the areas in Malang City, East Java, that serves as an inspiration for other regions. Polowijen is rich in traditional cultural arts, such as Malangan masks, various Wayang (puppet) performances, Ludruk (traditional theater), Bantengan, and even serves as a center for handicrafts. Notably, Polowijen is also the region of Ken Dedes. According to Isa Wahyudi, a spokesperson for Kampung Budaya Polowijen, "Polowijen, with its rich traditions in arts and culture, history, and other potentials, has awakened local community awareness to grow and actively develop culture, arts, and traditions amidst various cultural clashes and the diminishing values in society."

As previously explained, Bantengan is a traditional art form that has existed for a long time. In Polowijen, Bantengan is a cultural heritage that was once prominent and is now beginning to re-emerge. However, compared to other areas in Malang, this art form is still relatively underdeveloped. The Bantengan group in Polowijen was only established about a year ago, so its presence is still lagging behind compared to Bantengan groups in other parts of Malang (Jumadi, 2024).

Although Bantengan in Polowijen is not yet widespread, the sound of Bantengan accompaniment music can be heard almost daily, played by residents through sound systems. Additionally, many children are seen playing Bantengan using bullhead toys and whips made from banana stalks, often seen playing in the fields in the afternoon. Moreover, Bantengan performances are almost always present in various events, particularly in cultural parade carnivals.

The acceptance of local culture, such as Bantengan in Polowijen, is a concrete example of harmonious religious moderation. Although Bantengan has not yet become fully widespread, it still receives support and recognition from the local community. The frequent sounds of Bantengan music and children's participation in traditional games indicate a positive integration of culture into daily life. This reflects a moderate attitude that values and preserves local cultural heritage while respecting religious and social values. The presence of Bantengan in various events,

such as cultural parades, also demonstrates how local culture can collaborate with religious practices in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. This is an example of how religious moderation can be applied by maintaining a balance between cultural preservation and harmonious religious practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of religious moderation in Polowijen, as reflected through the local culture's acceptance of Bantengan culture, has shown positive and constructive results. Religious moderation acts as a bridge that facilitates integration and harmonization between local culture and religious practices, including in the context of Bantengan culture, which is part of the local community's traditions. Research has been conducted on the application of religious moderation in the context of local culture acceptance by examining the Bantengan art form in Polowijen, Malang City. Bantengan is a traditional performance art that combines elements of dance, martial arts, music, and chants with a strong magical nuance.

Therefore, the acceptance of Bantengan culture, as a form of local cultural expression, can be seen as an indicator that religious moderation plays a role in reducing tensions and fostering mutual understanding between religious values and local culture. Bantengan culture, which reflects the richness of tradition and local identity, is accepted and appreciated due to the inclusive and tolerant attitude promoted through religious moderation.

Overall, the implementation of religious moderation in Polowijen has successfully created a harmonious atmosphere where local culture and religious practices can coexist with mutual respect. This demonstrates that an adaptive and inclusive approach to religious moderation can contribute to the preservation of local culture while strengthening social harmony in a pluralistic society.

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