

## Religious Moderation and Diversity Management in Maintaning The Existence of The Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community

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### ABSTRACT

*The Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community is a group of individuals who can maintain their existence amidst the issue of intolerance. The members identify themselves as Shiva Buddha adherents. The members of the Triloka Pura Brahmaraja Community believe themselves to be the descendants of the last Majapahit. They have temples as a form of the ancestral tomb located in Ponggok District, Blitar Regency. The inauguration of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura temple was attended by adherents of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Confucianism. Moderation of religion is reflected through tolerance, acceptance, and respect for the members' beliefs. There are even several types of places of worship in one temple complex such as the Brahma Caturmuka and kelenteng. Surface-level diversity lies in social status, age, gender, ethnicity, and religion. The deep level of diversity lies in the values, ideologies, and motives of each member in conducting worship at the temple. Diversity management which is applied through religious moderation maintains harmonious relations with all creatures, even the invisible ones, anti-discrimination, and orientation to the homogeneity of Majapahit descent from a blend of Javanese, Balinese, and Chinese.*

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### 1. Introduction

The issue of intolerance is not a new thing in Indonesia. Social conflicts due to ethnicity, religion, and status issues are easy to go viral and become a topic of conversation that can trigger disintegration. Indonesia is a country that has a variety of ethnicities, cultures, languages, social statuses, and even religions. Disputes in the name of religion often have an impact on places of worship and terrorize its adherents. An example of a conflict in the name of religion that led to riots was reported by BBC News Indonesia (30/6/2016) where the main topics were the attacks of several hundred residents and the burning of six monasteries and one *Kelenteng* in Tanjung Balai. In addition, CCN Indonesia (18/9/2021) reported that FKUB urges the police to investigate the burning of the Deli Serdang Vihara on September 4, 2021. The house of worship that should ideally be a place for worshipers to perform religious ceremonies has now become an object of destruction from intolerant communities. This unresolved vandalism can trigger inter-religious conflicts and threaten the diversity that has become the hallmark of Indonesia. In the proliferation of intolerance and discrimination that occurs in Indonesia, all parties have the right and are obliged to seek harmony in religious life, even though differences of understanding are an inevitability that cannot be avoided (Novalina et al., 2021). Religious moderation is an effort to build commitment and take a neutral stance.

Religious moderation is a government program to support the creation of tolerance and peace in the social life of the society (Iye, 2018). Social groups that gather with the same goal, vision, and mission necessarily have goals to be achieved in forming a community group or social group whether in the social, educational, cultural or others. A group must consist of various biographical characteristics of its members so it is necessary to implement diversity management. Diversity management will contribute to the loyalty and engagement of community members (Ripci Nurdewati et al., 2020).

Diversity management can also foster harmony to achieve community goals (Maisyura, 2021). The community can still exist if they are able to overcome various obstacles and differences. Liliweri (2014: 18) explains that the community is not formed naturally but through a process of socialization and internalization. Maintaining the existence of the community has quite a challenge but it must continue to be carried out as a form of self-actualization of the members of the community.

One of the communities in Blitar that attracts attention is the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community which is located in Ponggok, Blitar Regency. This community identifies itself with the Shiva Buddha belief with the claims of the last generation in the Majapahit era. In the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura temple area, there are several temple buildings with symbols of Jenggala, Daha, and Kadiri. Still, in the temple area, there are also a *kelenteng*, gazebo, and also Brahma Caturmuka statue with the label brahmavihara (*metta, karuna, mudita dan upekkha*). Brahma Caturmuka represents Brahma Sahampati's desire to see things from all sides (Prasetyo, 2019).

The Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community was founded in 2009 with various characteristics of members but continues to take part in instilling the noble values of the ancestors to this day. Amid uncertain conditions of harmony and many intolerance issues, this community is still able to maintain its existence. The existence of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community is very interesting to study because its existence is very unique and colors the plurality of Indonesia, especially in Blitar Regency.

## 2. Methodology

The type of qualitative research used in this study is a phenomenological descriptive method. The activities include data collection to answer questions concerning the current state of the subject of the study. This descriptive phenomenological research determines and reports the current situation which is descriptive-analytical by using a qualitative approach with phenomenological characteristics. The data collected is always in the form of written words which include notes, reports, and photographs. By using the descriptive method, it can be fully described how religious moderation and diversity management are applied by members of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community.

In data collection, it used the technique of in-depth interviews with the administrators and members of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community in Blitar, observations, and collecting of several relevant documents related to the activities of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community. This research was conducted on the Shiva Buddha community, also known as the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community in the Blitar Regency, East Java Province. The research was carried out directly for approximately nine months, from February to October 2021. The data analysis process was through data reduction. "Reducing data means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns" (Sugiyono, 2009: 247). Data reduction was carried out on all data obtained from observations, interviews, or documentation obtained related to the research topic. The reduced data presented and drawn conclusions and verification. The validity of the data used was triangulation.

## 3. Result and Discussion

The Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Temple Community is an informal social group. An informal group is a group that exists in response to the need for social contact without a formal organizational structure (Robbins&Judge, 2017). Although the organizational structure was not made in detail, it still appears that there are individuals who are respected and upheld as figures in various ritual activities to honor ancestors within the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community.

The pattern of internal communication in the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community is dominated by informal communication based on kinship among community members. Internal communication tends to be situational. Because contact is only made on certain agreed days, such as the full moon, a ceremony or ritual is carried out to worship the ancestors. External communication carried out by the community to local village officials, leaders of worship places and other community leaders aims to establish harmony and religious moderation..

Religious moderation is an understanding that adheres to the middle way and does not adhere to radicalism or liberalism (Hasan, 2021).

This is in line with the Buddha's teaching known as the middle way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). Buddha taught that extremism is not the right way and it is necessary for people to avoid the two extreme views that consider everything eternal and extreme by assuming that something is impermanent. The Buddha said that a wise Tathagata no longer adheres to the notion of sensual gratification and the concept of self-mortification. This is stated in the Samyutta Nikaya 12.15 (Bodhi, 2020) "*Sabbam atthi'ti kho, kaccāna, ayameko anto.Sabbam natthi'ti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te, kaccāna, ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammam deseti*".

Religious moderation in the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community is part of the effort to create national harmony. To actualize the peace of the nation, religious moderation is needed where mutual recognition of the existence of other individuals, tolerance, respect for differences, and not forcing their will through violence (Akhmadi, 2019). The tolerance of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community member has been appearing since this community was formed. During the

inauguration of the temple at Brahmaraaja Triloka Pura, the members came from various regions and adhered to various religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Confucianism. All present with a sense of togetherness and respect. The members view the temple not only as a place of worship for begging, but also as an ancestral tomb that deserves respect as a form of devotion. Thus, the community members believe that the temple is an area to honor the ancestors who have died with various offerings made according to their abilities. Respect for ancestors is a characteristic of local beliefs or religions of ancient Indonesian society such as dynamism, animism, and totemism. Belief in objects that have supernatural powers or dynamism while belief in spirits that control a place or object is known as animism. (Afandi, 2018).

Although the community always welcomes anyone to join in worship, the Brahmaraaja Triloka Pura figure suggests that visitors come when the mood is good and happy because not all wishes always be fulfilled. The Informant Handik explained:

*Jadi kalau suntuk jangan ketempat ibadah karena kalau suntuk pasti menaruh harapan saya minta ini itu, iya kalau dikabulkan kalau nggak, wah ini, akhirnya kan malah menggerutu dirumah karena keinginannya tidak terpenuhi. Coba kalau dalam suasana hati yang tenang datang”* (so when you are not in the good mood and condition, do not visit to the temple because you will have high expectations and wishes in the worship, then you will very disappointed when your wishes are not fulfilled. Otherwise, it will not happen when you are in the good mood).

Efforts to minimize conflict and maintain diversity beyond the awareness of fellow humans and even acceptance of the spirits presence without feeling hostile as stated by Handri the informant:

*Kita ada karena ada itu, makanya orang selamatan itu kan simbol itu semua, bahasa mantra disajikan dengan sajen. Leluhur empat dipakai semua dihormati semua, yang pertama pada leluhur baku atau pokok orang tua, leluhur yang memberi kaweruh guru dll itu kita hormati, yang ketiga leluhur yang menguasai wilayah, leluhur yang tugasnya menggoda keimanan kita seperti jin setan dsb mereka semua sama-sama ciptaan harus kita hormati kita harus bersinergi. Kalau kita memusuhi sama dengan tidak menghargai ciptaan (We exist because of that, that's why the people conducting selamatan is a symbol, the language of the mantra is presented with offerings. The four ancestors are mentioned, all of them are respected. The first to the basic or principal ancestors: parents, we respect the ancestors who gave knowledge: teachers, etc., the third ancestors who controlled the territory, the ancestors whose job was to tempt our faith such as the devil, ghost, etc. they were all creation of God. we must respect we must synergize. If we are hostile is the same as not respecting the creation).*

The Brahmaraaja Triloka Pura Temple is a means to honor the ancestors so there is no religious label to limit the devotion of members to their ancestors. This was stated by Mrs. Suliyah “... agama dari Hindu, Buddha, Katolik bahkan yang Konghucu klintengpun kesini, Islampun kesini. Jadi saya disini saya tidak menanyakan agama. Cuma tanya, apa mau sowan leluhur? Saya nggak tanya agama, ya monggolah”. (“...the adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism and even Confucian are here, Islam is here too. So I'm not here asking about religion. Just asking, do you want to visit your ancestors? I'm not asking about religion, please. Whoever comes here is our family”). Based on this statement, it can be seen that the form of ancestral service is a value adopted so the various religious differences of members are not a significant problem. It becomes easier to accept diversity.

The total number of community members cannot be identified in detail because it is not a formal organization. There are not many members who can be found in daily activities but when a large ceremony is carried out the number of members present increases. Handri stated that “Data (penganut) secara pasti tidak terdeteksi. Tapi kalau pas acara baru kelihatan karena yang datang tidak kenal agama,” (The data (of adherents) with certainty cannot be mentioned. But when there is a ceremony, many members attend it, because there is no religious barrier). This is like what happened when the inauguration of the temple or the Odalan ritual, the participants who attended and were involved in the ceremony increased dramatically compared to when there was no big event being held.

Community members and every guest who visits the Brahmaraaja Triloka Pura Temple tend to respect each other's religious differences. The administrators and members seem to respect multicultural life. This is a form of religious moderation that has developed in the Brahmaraaja Triloka Pura community. The implementation of religious moderation can be seen in the community's efforts to establish kinship with the surrounding environment by conducting workshops with stakeholders. Problem solving is also discussed, decision-making is also carried out democratically. It is stated by informant as follow:

*Ada sarasehan walaupun dikemas dengan konsep arisan, biarpun cuman ga seberapa tapi kan bisa kumpul bersama. Jadi itu kumpul dari berbagai lapisan masyarakat, pamong-pamong itu sampai tingkatan RT RW, tokoh masyarakat, jadi tiap bulan kita sarasehan. Tiap ada permasalahan yang terjadi kita cari jalan keluar bersama-sama".* (There is a gathering even though it is packaged with the concept of arisan, even though it's only a small amount but it can be gathered together. So it's a gathering from various levels of society, the civil servants up to the RT RW level, community leaders, so we have a meeting every month. Every time there is a problem, we find a solution together).

Religion in the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community is no longer a significant obstacle because the ideology of Unity in Diversity, the spirit of mutual cooperation and consistency in maintaining Pancasila and harmony are deeply rooted as values held by community members. Moderate attitude characterizes the behavior of members in responding to religious diversity in various circles of society. Moderate attitude characterizes the behavior of members in responding to religious diversity in various circles of society. Not only accepting differences in religion, gender, but also race and ethnicity and respect for fellow human beings. Respecting and living in harmony and peace are also addressed to invisible creatures such as ancestors, jinn, demons and so on. This shows that accepting differences are not only addressed to fellow human beings, but all beings, both visible and invisible. This is in line with the Buddha's teaching, in Karaniya Metta Sutta of Sutta Nipata 1.8 (Nanamoli, 2004) " So with a boundless heart, should one cherish all living beings, radiating kindness over the entire world". Belief in universal love for all people and even all beings, respecting ancestors is continuously performed by the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community. The orientation to ancestral similarities and acceptance of differences supports the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community to exist and maintain cultural customs.

The level of diversity in the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community is most visible at the surface level. Surface level diversity according to Robbins & Judge (2017:26) is a variety of easily recognizable characteristics such as differences in age, gender, race, ethnicity, which can give rise to certain stereotypes even though they do not always reflect the mindset. The diversity that appears from the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community can be reflexed in the difference of the members' age consisting of children, youth to the elderly. The youths play an active role in preserving culture and the elders' act to lead religious ritual events such as *Sembahyang* and *Slametan* for local events. While at the larger events as *odalan* led by elders from outside the region considered to have a higher level of knowledge. Gender is also not a barrier for members to show a sense of devotion to their ancestors. Men and women have the same opportunity to come to the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura temple to pray to their ancestors.

Gender differences are not a barrier for members to unite in forming groups. Even the *ageman* of Shiva Buddha is also a form of respect for fathers and mothers. The collaboration of men and women in cultural carnival activities to inaugurate the building for the placement of the Brahma Caturmuka statue. In general, women often get different treatment in an organization. However, discrimination in the rituals of worship for women is not justified in this community. Handik stated that "*kalau perempuan kan ada siklus bulanan, itu biasanya dianggap tidak suci, padahal tidak. Itu dulu kan belum ada pembalut, itu supaya tidak mengotori tempat saja biar darah itu tidak jatuh*". (... if women have monthly cycles, it is usually considered impure, even though they are not. Back then, there were no sanitary napkins, that was so as not to contaminate the place so that the blood would not fall). Based on this statement, it can be concluded that technological advances allow women to keep active in various situations and women still have the opportunity to come to the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura temple to pay respects.

Apart from gender differences, members of the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura community consist of various ages. The youths are the spearhead of the community and the initiator. Brahma Raja Triloka Pura in Ponggok started from some young men who were critical of the life phenomena and the universe. However, the participation of the older generation during major activities such as *odalan*, carnival, gatherings, and offerings is no less active. Elders also often play an essential role in leading rituals to honor ancestors.

The racial similarity of the most members of the Brahma Raja Triloka Pura lies in the characteristics presented by Handri who stated that: "...*kita satu leluhur*" (we are one ancestor). It can be characterized by differences in skin color, the tailbone of a new baby born, the brownish spots on the skin of the elders. Those are a sign of racial similarity that should unite. Conflicts arise due to lack of communication, Handik also stated that "...*karena tidak pernah duduk bersama, padahal sama, face, bentuk tubuhnya sama, coba kalau dengan timur tengah, orang barat, beda. Secara genetik beda*" (because they never sit together, even though they are in the same of face and body shape. It is different from middle eastern people, western people, different. Genetically different). Based on the statement above, it can be understood that the similarity of races that gave rise to a sense of togetherness as a descendant of Majapahit.

Members of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community consist of various ethnicities including Javanese, Balinese and Chinese and others. The founders accepted various groups of people to join and pay honor together to ancestors because there are no restrictions for certain races and ethnicities as said by Suliyah "...*bukan untuk agama, disini semua elemen masuk karena apa? Ini semua Jawa, Bali, Cina masuk. Cina kesini, bali kesini, jawa juga*" (...not for religion, here all elements can get into, Java, Bali, China. Chinese is here, Balines is here, Javanese is here too). This statement is strengthened by Handik:

*Kami masih mengakui keturunan majapahit jadi kita bikin simbol, kami dari trah ponorogo, kami pakai trilokapura, trilokapura ini majapahit yang terakhir. Trowulan hancur diserang Patah maka disini bersatu Daha, Jenggala, Kediri jadi satu. Disini kegiatan kegiatan kita selalu Siwa Buddha tetap kita pakai, jadi kita ada simbol klentengnya juga. Karena memang leluhurnya kita kan ada campuran, jika dilihat dari sejarah kan ini jawa, bali, cina kan berkaitan semua. Makanya di bali sampai detik ini itu tidak meninggalkan sajen itu selalu pakai duit gobog. Karena menghormati leluhur"*

We still admit the descendants of Majapahit, so we make a symbol, we are from the Ponorogo breed, we use Trilokapura, the Trilokapura as the last Majapahit. Trowulan was destroyed and attacked by Patah, so here Daha, Jenggala, Kediri are united as one. Here, we always use Shiva Buddha for our activities, so we have the symbol of the *Kelenteng* as well. Because we have mixed ancestors, just look at the history of Java, Bali, China are all related. That's why in Bali until this moment, they don't leave offerings, they always use *duit gobog* for respecting the ancestors).

Community members consisting of Javanese, Balinese, and Chinese come together in diversity. Ethnic differences bring strong cultural identities, one of which is in terms of dress and ancestral worship rituals. In addition, the ethnic groups who join the community are dominantly Javanese, Balinese, and Chinese so in the temple complex, it appears a mixture of the three ethnic cultures. The implementation of diversity management in supporting the existence of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura temple community is highly respected by community leaders and members. Diversity Management creates change that enables everyone to reach their maximum potential (Kinicki, 2014). Various potentials and identities of community members are expressed in the form of buildings located in the temple complex. It consists of a special gazebo for the statue of Brahma Caturmuka from Thailand, *kelenteng* miniature, and temples with Javanese-Balinese nuances, all of which become a single unit that supports diversity.

Diversity within the organization needs to be managed so that it becomes a source of organizational strength and supports effectiveness (Dewi, 2020). The main characteristic of the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura community in managing diversity is by building positive relationships. This approach is carried out with the assumption that good relations can overcome differences and the quality of interaction with acceptance and understanding can also make harmony. The characters try to maintain stability by building effective communication. When there is no mutual understanding, it can lead to conflict. Some efforts to build good relations between members and the surrounding community include conducting regular gatherings, social gatherings, *karawitan* involving members and stakeholders. Ancestral worship activities are also carried out on the full moon.

#### 4. Conclusion

The existence of the Triloka Pura Brahmaraja Community can survive because the members maintain the culture and accept diversity. Diversity is not a barrier to honoring ancestors together as a form of devotion. Diversity in community members includes social status, age, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Religious moderation has been implemented so that diversity can be managed properly. The sense of empathy and solidarity among the descendants of Majapahit facilitates the management of diversity in the Brahmaraja Triloka Pura Community. The difference acceptance, tolerance, anti-discrimination, and a sense of love are developed not only among human beings but also for invisible beings.

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