



Cultural and Religious Interaction at Medana Cemetery: A Model of Social Harmony

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A B S T R A C T

This research examines the cultural and religious interactions between Muslim and Hindu communities in Makam Medana, North Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Using a qualitative method with a case study approach, data was collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis with Fritjof Schuon's theory of social esotericism used as the basis for analysis. The results show that the Medana Tomb serves as an important space for social harmony, where both communities engage in shared spiritual and cultural practices. Through inner experiences that transcend religious, cultural and social boundaries, the tomb serves as a bridge that connects different religions through a universal understanding of divine truth that manifests in different outward forms. These interactions facilitate mutual understanding and respect, and contribute to the formation of an inclusive and harmonious society in North Lombok. This research concludes that Makam Medana offers a model of social harmony that is relevant in a multicultural context.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago with rich ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. This diversity, on the one hand, is the strength of the nation in forming a pluralistic national identity. However, on the other hand, this diversity is also often a source of social, ethnic, cultural and religious conflict. Particularly in Eastern Indonesia, which includes provinces such as Papua, Maluku and East Nusa Tenggara, these conflicts have their own characteristics and dynamics that require special attention (Loh, 2017; Rahman dkk, 2020).

Eastern Indonesia, with its ethnic diversity that includes tribes such as Papua, Maluku and Flores, is often an arena for ethnic conflict. Competition over access to natural resources, land and jobs are among the factors fuelling tensions (Silvana, 2013; Istania, 2022). In Papua, for example, ethnic conflicts often occur between indigenous Papuans and migrants from other parts of Indonesia. Economic injustice and social marginalisation are the main triggers of this conflict. Similarly, in Maluku, conflicts between ethnic groups often occur due to cultural differences and economic interests. (Irfan, 2022; Jayadi, et al. 2023).

In addition to ethnic conflict, Eastern Indonesia also experiences cultural conflict. Deep cultural

differences between ethnic groups can lead to tensions. In East Nusa Tenggara, for example, cultural conflicts can arise between tribes that have different customs and traditions (Burhani, 2014). Differences in ways of life, customary practices and language are often a source of misunderstanding and mistrust between these groups.

Religious conflict is a crucial issue in Eastern Indonesia. Religious differences between community groups often cause tensions that lead to violent conflict (Pedersen, 2016; Al Qurtuby, 2016). A clear example is the religious conflict that occurred in Maluku in the late 1990s and early 2000s, involving Muslims and Christians. This conflict resulted in thousands of casualties and extensive damage to social and economic infrastructure. Religious tensions are also often exacerbated by ethnic and cultural differences, making conflicts more complex and difficult to resolve. (Hisyam, 2006; Mutawakkil, 2022).

The complexity of conflict in Eastern Indonesia is not only caused by the above factors, but also by political interventions from both central and local governments. Policies that are insensitive to local conditions often exacerbate conflicts. In addition, the presence of large companies that exploit natural resources without regard for the rights of indigenous peoples also adds to the dynamics of conflict in this region.

Identifying and understanding the root causes and dynamics of social, ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts

in Eastern Indonesia is crucial to creating effective conflict resolution strategies (Suprpto, 2015; Hartoyo et al., 2020; Eko, & Putranto, 2021). This research aims to analyse the various factors that trigger conflict in Eastern Indonesia and find solutions that can be applied to prevent and resolve conflicts in a sustainable manner (Tebba, 2012; Jayadi, 2022). With a comprehensive and inclusive approach, it is hoped that the results of this research can make a significant contribution to sustainable peace and development efforts in Eastern Indonesia (Ferdiansyah dkk, 2023).

Indonesia, as a country with very rich ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, has a legacy of local wisdom that reflects the values of tolerance and interfaith harmony (Badrun et al., 2023; Amin & Ritonga, 2024). This local wisdom is reflected in various aspects of community life, including in the utilisation and respect for sacred places such as tombs, temples, mosques and churches (Burhani, 2014). These places not only function as centres of religious activity, but also as symbols of harmony and spaces for social interaction that bridge differences between groups.

Local wisdom in Indonesia often reflects the values of wisdom passed down through generations in society. These values include tolerance, gotong royong and respect for differences in various regions. Local wisdom practices have been successful in creating an environment conducive to interfaith harmony (Arsal et al., 2023). For example, in Bali, Hindus and Muslims coexist peacefully, with each group respecting the other's places of worship, such as temples and mosques.

Sacred places such as tombs, temples, mosques and churches play an important role in maintaining and strengthening values of tolerance and harmony. In many communities, these places are not only centres of religious activity, but also social and cultural meeting places (Hammo & Al-Salam, 2023). For example: Tombs: In many regions, the graves of important figures or ancestors are often places of pilgrimage for different religious groups. These tombs become symbols of mutual respect that transcend religious boundaries. In Medana Village, North Lombok, for example, the Medana Tomb becomes a liminal space that connects Muslim and Hindu communities through the practice of pilgrimage and joint ceremonies.

Through pilgrimages, ceremonies and social gatherings, both communities engage in interactions that strengthen social bonds and reduce the distance between them. These interactions create mutual understanding and respect, which form the basis of inclusive social construction (Hayden et al., 2016). Rituals performed at Medana Cemetery often involve participation from both communities. Ceremonies such as *tahlilan* (joint prayer) and *selamatan* are attended by members of both the Muslim and Hindu communities, creating opportunities to share spiritual and cultural experiences. Participation in these shared rituals helps to create a collective identity that transcends religious boundaries (Saliki, 2022).

The Medana tomb has a sacred significance that is respected by both communities. For the Muslim community, this tomb may be considered an important pilgrimage site that has spiritual value. For the Hindu community, while it may have a different interpretation, they still honour this place as part of the village's cultural

heritage. This shared respect for symbolism and sacred meaning helps to create a shared space that is valued by all parties. The Medana Tomb functions as a liminal space where the boundaries between religious identities become blurred. In this context, individuals from both communities can experience an identity transition that allows them to better accept and respect differences (Budiwanti, 2012). This liminal space also allows for social transformation where new norms and values can develop. The Medana cemetery is a centre of social cohesion that strengthens solidarity between communities. Mutual aid activities in maintaining and caring for the tomb, as well as celebrations involving the entire community, create a strong network of solidarity. This social cohesion is crucial in maintaining harmony and preventing conflict.

This research analyses how local wisdom and social construction at Medana Tomb contribute to interfaith harmony. By studying the interactions, rituals and values that develop around the tomb, we can gain deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying tolerance and harmony between communities. It can also serve as a model for other regions that face similar challenges in terms of interfaith harmony. By analysing the factors that support social cohesion in Medana Village, similar strategies can be adapted and applied elsewhere to promote peace and social stability. In addition, this study makes an important contribution to the fields of anthropology and sociology of religion by providing empirical data on social construction and inter-community dynamics in local contexts. This research can add to the academic literature on how sacred spaces can be important mediators in building and maintaining interfaith harmony.

The value of interfaith harmony in Indonesia is also strengthened through various community initiatives that promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation (Siddiq et al., 2024). Religious harmony forums, gotong royong activities, and joint celebrations of religious holidays are some examples of practices that strengthen social ties and reduce the potential for conflict.

This research aims to identify and analyse the role of local wisdom in promoting tolerance and interfaith harmony in Indonesia. With a focus on sacred places such as tombs, temples, mosques and churches, this research will explore how local practices and traditional wisdom values can contribute to peace and social harmony. Through a comprehensive and participatory approach, it can provide new insights that are useful for efforts to preserve local wisdom and strengthen interfaith harmony in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research was conducted in an interfaith community of Muslims and Hindus in Medana Village, Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach as described by Yin (2011). The informants in this study consisted of traditional leaders (MY, and YK), religious leaders (GJ, IW), and Muslim and Hindu community members (BQ, IK, MA, RL) who served as the unit of analysis.

The data collection techniques used included direct observation in the field, where researchers met with Muslim and Hindu community groups as they carried out socio-cultural practices and religious rituals at Medana Cemetery. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with predetermined informants to obtain accurate and in-depth data. Documentation related to the Pujawali ritual that has been published in books and journals was also explored as part of the data collection techniques (Creswell, 2016; Schoch, 2020). Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion drawing (Miles, 1994). Data validity was tested through the multi-source of evidence method to ensure the validity and reliability of the data obtained. After the data was collected through various data collection techniques, the first step was the collection of relevant facts for the research (Saldana, 2014).

The next step was data reduction, which is the process of selecting, classifying and organising data before it is analysed in depth. The data that has been selected is then arranged and presented in a form that is easy to understand. This data presentation is important to provide a clear picture of the research findings. After presenting the data, researchers verified or drew conclusions based on the patterns found in the data. This process involves categorising and interpreting the data to obtain the desired results. The data is then analysed to form patterns that show correspondence between the various findings. The conclusions drawn are naturalistic, describing the actual conditions that occur in the field (Miles, 1994).

This research shows that the use of qualitative methods with a case study approach is very effective in understanding the social and cultural dynamics in Medana Village. Through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, this research was able to reveal various aspects of social interaction and cultural practices that occur in Medana Tomb. The interactive approach in data analysis ensures that the conclusions drawn are based on strong evidence and tested for validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Portrait of Muslim and Hindu Community in Medana Cemetery, North Lombok

North Lombok is dominated by Muslims, the majority of whom are from the Sasak tribe. The Muslim community in this region demonstrates the strong Islamic culture and traditions that are integrated into daily life. Traditional ceremonies such as weddings, circumcisions, and various religious events such as the Prophet's birthday, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha are celebrated with great fervour. One striking tradition is 'Begawe,' a large feast that involves the entire community in its preparation and execution, reflecting the

strong social ties among them. Islamic education plays an important role in the lives of the Muslim community in North Lombok, with many children studying in madrasahs and pesantren. Economically, these Muslim communities are largely dependent on the agriculture, fisheries and petty trade sectors that form the backbone of their livelihoods.

The Hindu community in North Lombok, comprised primarily of Balinese who immigrated from Bali Island, coexists with the Muslim community and often engages in harmonious social and economic interactions. Despite differences in religious practices, the Hindu community still upholds their religious traditions and rituals, such as the Galungan, Kuningan and Nyepi ceremonies (Saihu, 2020). The existence of temples in some areas is the centre of religious and social activities for the Hindu community, showing the importance of places of worship in their lives (Segara, 2020). Formal and non-formal education in Hindu communities includes Hindu religious studies, in addition to the national curriculum. This shows how Hindu communities maintain their religious identity while still participating in the national education system. The Hindu community's economy is also diverse, with involvement in the agriculture, handicrafts, and tourism sectors, which form the pillars of their economy.

Social life between Muslim and Hindu communities in North Lombok reflects harmonious harmony. They often help each other in social and economic activities, demonstrating a strong spirit of gotong royong. Joint events such as cultural festivals and gotong royong activities not only integrate the two communities, but also strengthen the social ties between them (Fajrusalam et al., 2023). Nonetheless, maintaining harmony is not without challenges. Social and economic issues sometimes arise and affect interfaith dynamics. Therefore, efforts to strengthen interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural education programmes are essential. These programmes are expected to further strengthen harmony and understanding between communities.

This portrait of life in North Lombok shows how diverse the existing communities are and how they strive to coexist peacefully, despite having different religious backgrounds (Kembarawan, 2020). The harmony created between the Muslim and Hindu communities in Makam Medana is a concrete example of their success in managing differences and building social solidarity. The phenomenon of these two religious communities provides important insights into the social and cultural dynamics taking place in North Lombok. Approaches that respect and strengthen local cultural values have proven effective in creating harmony amidst differences. Therefore, the model of harmony applied in North Lombok can be used as an example for other regions in an effort to create a peaceful and inclusive society.

2. The role of Medana Tomb as a space of Muslim and Hindu Liminality

The Medana Tomb in Medana Village, North Lombok, plays an important role as a liminal space for the Muslim and Hindu communities. The concept of liminal space, which originated in anthropology, refers to a space or period of transition where the boundaries between two

states or identities become blurred (Lipska & Zagórska, 2021). According to Victor Turner (2017) said, liminality is a transitional phase in rites of passage that places individuals or groups outside their usual social status. It is a period of ambiguity and freedom where social norms and identities are suspended or revised.

As a place that often sits between the sacred and the profane, life and death, and multiple social identities, tombs are an ideal location to explore the concept of liminality (Ahlrichs et al., 2015; Tripathi, 2022). Medana Tomb, in particular, serves as a place of pilgrimage for both Muslim and Hindu communities. These pilgrimage activities create a space where religious identities can interact with each other and share spiritual experiences.

For the Muslim community, Medana Tomb is revered as a historical and spiritual place. Although the Hindu community has a different view of the tomb, they still respect this place as part of the village's cultural heritage. Rituals performed at Makam Medana often involve members from both communities. For example, tahlilan (joint prayer) or selamatan ceremonies conducted by the Muslim community may be attended by members of the Hindu community as a form of respect. Conversely, Hindu rituals that may involve honouring ancestors or important figures buried there also create a spiritual bridge between the two groups.

Medana's tomb also serves as a place where stories about ancestors and local history are told, forming a shared identity that crosses religious boundaries. Cultural activities held around the tomb, such as festivals or traditional ceremonies, often involve both communities, strengthening social and cultural ties. By creating spaces where both communities can interact in a sacred and respectful context, these tombs help to reduce the potential for tension and conflict.

The shared experience of pilgrimage and ritual at Medana Cemetery creates a sense of solidarity and deeper understanding between communities. This liminal space helps to strengthen local identities that transcend religious barriers. Identity as residents of Medana Village becomes more dominant than separate religious identities, creating a more cohesive community (Khan, 2017). Through interactions at the tombs, community members learn about each other's values, traditions and beliefs, which can lead to transformations in attitudes and behaviour.

Liminal experiences at the tombs allow individuals to reflect on their own identities and their relationships with others, which can result in positive changes in community dynamics (Beckstead, 2021; Jewkes & Laws, 2021). Overall, the Medana Tomb serves as an important liminal space for both Muslim and Hindu communities in Medana Village, North Lombok. It is not only a pilgrimage and ritual site, but also a social and cultural space that connects and strengthens relationships between communities.

Thus, the Medana Tomb not only acts as a physical location but also as a social and cultural arena where the dynamics of interfaith interaction can take place

harmoniously. The tomb's contribution to inter-community harmony and solidarity is a concrete example of how liminal space can facilitate conflict reduction and the formation of a shared identity. Therefore, the role of Medana Tomb as a liminal space is very significant in the effort to create an inclusive and harmonious society in North Lombok.

3. Social Construction Model of Muslim and Hindu Communities

The Medana Tomb in Medana Village, North Lombok, serves as a significant meeting point for the Muslim and Hindu communities. The social construction model in this place can be explained through several key concepts in sociology, namely social interaction, collective identity, sacred space, and social cohesion mechanisms (Berger, 2017; Berger, 2018). Muslim and Hindu communities engage in intense interactions through pilgrimage activities, rituals, and traditional ceremonies. These interactions create spaces for communication between members of different religious communities, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and enhance mutual understanding. These encounters become important platforms for dialogue and exchange of spiritual experiences (Schuon, 1983).

Shared rituals such as tahlilan (communal prayer) and selamatan often involve members of both communities. Participation in these rituals not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also deepens understanding and respect for each other's traditions. Thus, co-operation in rituals becomes an important mechanism in building social cohesion between Muslim and Hindu communities. The Medana cemetery has become a focal point for the collective identity of Medana villagers. Despite having different religious beliefs, they share an identity as villagers who honour a common cultural and historical heritage. Activities at Medana Tomb help to shape a shared spiritual identity (Hall, 2015). Despite different religions, both communities developed a respect and appreciation for this sacred place. Medana Tomb is considered a sacred space by both communities. This view creates deep respect and emphasises the importance of this place in their spiritual and social lives. The existence of the tomb as a sacred space allows both communities to transcend their religious boundaries and find common ground in spiritual experiences (Schuon, 2007).

The norms and values that develop around Medana Cemetery reflect a shared commitment to harmony and respect. For example, the norm of mutual respect for each other's religious ceremonies is an important foundation for interfaith interaction. The tradition of gotong royong in maintaining and caring for the tomb and in the implementation of traditional ceremonies also strengthens social ties and togetherness (Sulaiman, 2016). This is an important mechanism in building strong social cohesion. The Medana tomb is a

place where potential conflicts can be mitigated through positive dialogue and interaction. Meetings at the tomb are often used as an opportunity to repair relationships and resolve misunderstandings. Community leaders from both communities often act as mediators in maintaining harmony and resolving conflicts that may arise. Their role is crucial in ensuring the continuity of dialogue and harmonious interaction.

The rituals performed at the tombs contain strong symbolism that both communities can understand and appreciate (Tomlan & Tomlan, 2015; Lattu, 2019). This symbolism creates a cultural bridge that strengthens interfaith relations and helps build mutual understanding. By appreciating this symbolism, both communities can create spaces that are inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity (Setiawan, 2016).

The social construction model at Medana Tomb involves continuous learning and social transformation. Intense social interactions and participation in shared rituals allow community members to learn about each other's values, traditions and beliefs. Liminal experiences at the tomb allow individuals to reflect on their own identities and their relationships with others, which can result in positive changes in community dynamics (Turner, 1985; Ngangi, 2011). The tomb serves as a centre that connects both communities through spiritual and cultural experiences that they jointly value and respect. It is not only a pilgrimage and ritual site but also a social and cultural space that connects and strengthens relationships between communities. As such, Makam Medana plays an important role in creating an inclusive and harmonious society in North Lombok.

Social harmony between Muslim and Hindu communities is reflected in mutual aid and joint participation in cultural events, although social and economic challenges sometimes arise. Interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural education programmes are essential to strengthening this harmony. The harmony created is an example of successful management of differences and social solidarity that can serve as a model for other regions (Zainuddin, 2013). The Medana Tomb serves as a place of pilgrimage for both Muslim and Hindu communities, creating a space for interaction and sharing spiritual experiences. For the Muslim community, the tomb is a historical and spiritual place, while for the Hindu community, despite their different views, they still respect it as part of their cultural heritage. Shared rituals such as tahlilan and selamatan strengthen relationships between communities.

Medana tombs are also places to tell ancestral stories and local history, forming a shared identity that crosses religious boundaries. Cultural activities around the tombs strengthen social and cultural ties, reduce tensions, and create a sense of solidarity. Liminal experiences at the tomb enable reflection on identity and social relations, resulting in positive changes in community dynamics (Turner, 1979). The social construction model at Medana Tomb involves intense

social interaction, collective identity formation, respect for a shared sacred space, and strong social cohesion mechanisms. The Medana Tomb becomes a focal point for the collective identity of Medana villagers, developing a shared spiritual identity and transcending religious boundaries.

The norms and values that develop around the Medana Tomb reflect a commitment to harmony and respect, with the tradition of gotong royong strengthening social ties. The tomb is also a place for dialogue to reduce potential conflicts, with community leaders acting as mediators. Rituals at the tomb contain symbolism that strengthens interfaith relations. The social construction model at Medana Tomb includes learning and social transformation through liminal interactions and experiences, enabling identity reflection and positive change in community dynamics. This place connects both communities through spiritual and cultural experiences (Schuon, 2013), playing an important role in creating an inclusive and harmonious society in North Lombok.

The Medana Tomb is an important centre in building collective identity for both Muslim and Hindu communities. The existence of this tomb is not only a spiritual site but also a social space where various rituals and cultural practices are performed. Through tahlilan and selamatan, relationships between communities are strengthened, creating a deep sense of solidarity and togetherness. The Medana cemetery functions as an arena for identity reflection and cultural interaction. Shared rituals such as tahlilan and selamatan allow both communities to participate in the same activities, creating liminal experiences that support social transformation and identity reflection. This helps in reducing tensions and strengthening social bonds, which is important for maintaining harmony in a culturally and religiously diverse society. The importance of the norms and values that developed around the Medana Tomb, such as the tradition of gotong royong and respect for shared sacred space reflect a commitment to inter-community harmony and respect. In addition, the role of community leaders as mediators in interfaith dialogue is crucial in reducing the potential for conflict and ensuring the sustainability of harmonious relationships.

Makam Medana is an effective social construction model in creating an inclusive and harmonious society in North Lombok. Intense social interaction, collective identity formation, and strong social cohesion mechanisms are key factors that support the success of this model. Thus, Makam Medana not only acts as a cultural and spiritual site, but also as an agent of social change that contributes to community welfare and harmony. The social and cultural dynamics in the community are diverse, and offer a practical model for creating social harmony through an approach that focuses on cultural interactions and liminal experiences. The success of this model can serve as an example for other communities facing similar challenges in maintaining harmony and inclusiveness amidst diversity.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of this article emphasises the importance of cultural and religious interaction in building social harmony in Medana Tomb, North Lombok. Through research using qualitative methods with a case study approach, it was found that the Medana Tomb serves as an important space for both Muslim and Hindu communities to interact with each other in spiritual and cultural practices. The use of Fritjof Schuon's theory of social esotericism in this analysis shows that the inner experiences that occur at the tomb transcend religious, cultural and social boundaries, creating a universal spiritual consciousness.

Medana's tomb is not only a place of pilgrimage, but also a liminal space where religious and social identities converge in an egalitarian atmosphere. These interactions not only promote collective consciousness and shared understanding, but also lead to interfaith solidarity, which contributes to the formation of an inclusive and harmonious society. Pilgrims experience spiritual encounters that foster respect, mutual understanding, and unity across differences in religious and cultural identities.

This article highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue as a pathway to peace and social cohesion in multicultural societies such as North Lombok. The Medana Tomb, as a symbol of tolerance and harmony, offers a model of social harmony that is relevant and applicable in other pluralist contexts. Therefore, this research not only provides academic insights, but also becomes a practical reference in the management of interfaith relations in diverse societies.

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