

LOCAL TRADITIONS AND THE DYNAMICS OF DIVERSITY IN NEGERI WARAKA

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Abstract

This research explores religious diversity and the value of harmony in the traditions of the Waraka community using a descriptive qualitative approach. The primary objective is to analyze how religious diversity is recognized in daily life and how values of harmony are promoted through their traditions. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document review with key informants such as the King of Waraka, his wife, religious leaders from Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam, as well as community members from various religions, including the King's daughter-in-law from Manado. The collected data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's data analysis techniques. The findings show that the Waraka community practices interfaith tolerance through the joint construction of places of worship and shared religious celebrations. Traditions like "Ronda Kambing" and "Natsar Negeri" serve as concrete examples of interfaith interaction that strengthen social understanding. This research concludes that the religious harmony practices in Waraka can inspire the creation of inclusive and tolerant societies globally, with an emphasis on educational approaches and more structured interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: religious diversity, social harmony, local tradition, Negeri Waraka, interfaith tolerance

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menggali keragaman agama dan nilai harmoni dalam tradisi masyarakat Waraka dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Tujuan utamanya adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana keragaman agama diakui dalam kehidupan sehari-hari dan bagaimana nilai-nilai harmoni dipromosikan melalui tradisi mereka. Metode pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan tinjauan dokumen, dengan informan utama seperti Raja Waraka, istrinya, pemimpin agama Kristen, Katolik, dan Islam, serta anggota masyarakat dari berbagai agama, termasuk menantu perempuan Raja yang berasal dari Manado. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis data Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Waraka mempraktikkan toleransi antaragama melalui pembangunan tempat ibadah bersama dan perayaan agama bersama. Tradisi seperti "Ronda Kambing" dan "Natsar Negeri" menjadi contoh konkret interaksi antaragama yang memperkuat pemahaman sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa praktik harmoni agama di Waraka dapat menjadi inspirasi untuk membangun masyarakat inklusif dan toleran secara global, dengan pendekatan edukatif dan dialog antaragama yang lebih terstruktur.

Kata Kunci: keragaman agama, harmoni sosial, tradisi lokal, Negeri Waraka, toleransi lintas agama

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, and culture reflects its richness but also poses challenges to unity. While often seen as divisive, effective management can make diversity a unifying force. This article argues that values of harmony in local traditions can strengthen unity in Indonesia's multicultural society.

Existing studies on interreligious harmony in Indonesia have examined interfaith dialogue (Suparjo et al., 2022), the risks of unmanaged diversity (Ruslan, 2020), and socio-cultural influences on interfaith relationships in conflict-prone areas (Pangalila et al., 2024). However, limited attention has been given to leveraging local traditions to promote unity, especially in regions like Maluku. This study addresses this gap by analyzing religious diversity and harmony values in Waraka, a village that has maintained cohesion amidst broader conflicts in Maluku.

Drawing on contemporary theories of tolerance, such as Maurer and Gellera's analysis of 17th and 18th-century religious tolerance in Britain, the study examines how beliefs are mediated in political and moral contexts, highlighting the evolving nature of religious tolerance (Maurer & Gellera, 2020).

Blakemore, in his study on faith-based diplomacy, emphasizes the critical role of interfaith dialogue in international diplomacy, particularly in countries with high religious diversity like Indonesia (Blakemore, 2019). Blakemore asserts that interfaith dialogue has proven to be an effective tool for mitigating identity-based conflicts and religious violence, but the link between this dialogue and national diplomacy remains underdeveloped. He points out that while interfaith dialogue in Indonesia has been used strategically to promote inclusive and peaceful policies, challenges remain in ensuring its long-term success. Blakemore's perspective offers a crucial lens through which to understand how interfaith dialogue can foster unity in a pluralistic society by encouraging cooperation and mutual understanding across different religious communities.

This research aims to explore the religious diversity within the Waraka community and its social dynamics, while also examining how the values of harmony embedded in local traditions contribute to fostering unity among its members.

Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on urban or conflict-prone areas (e.g., Ambon, Poso), this study examines a rural community that has successfully upheld interreligious harmony despite being situated in a historically volatile region. The methodological approach is qualitative, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis to capture the nuanced interplay between local traditions and harmonious coexistence in Waraka.

By investigating these aspects, this article contributes to the literature on interfaith harmony in Indonesia, offering a fresh perspective on how rural communities can leverage their cultural and religious diversity as a cohesive force in a multicultural society.

The concept of religious tolerance has evolved significantly over time, particularly through philosophical and theological debates encompassing various perspectives. One in-depth study of this is presented by Maurer and Gellera, who analyze the contributions of 17th and 18th-century philosophers and theologians from Scotland and England in discussing religious tolerance (Maurer & Gellera, 2020). In their work, they delve into the nature of religious freedom, the relationship between church and state, and the role of faith confessions in the search for orthodoxy. They argue that tolerance is not merely about accepting differences but also about how beliefs are mediated in political and moral spaces, especially during the early modern period, which introduced new perspectives on religious freedom (Maurer & Gellera, 2020).

Additionally, Blakemore, in his study on faith-based diplomacy, emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue in international diplomacy, particularly in countries with high religious diversity, such as Indonesia. Interfaith dialogue has proven to be an effective tool for alleviating identity-based conflicts and religiously motivated violence. Blakemore points out that while interfaith dialogue has flourished since the 9/11 events, the connection between this dialogue and state diplomacy remains underdeveloped. In the context of Indonesia, interfaith dialogue has been strategically used to achieve more inclusive and peaceful policy objectives, although challenges

remain in ensuring long-term success (Blakemore, 2019).

Locke wrote, "No man is naturally attached to any particular church or sect; but every man incorporates himself voluntarily into the society in which he believes he has found a confession and worship truly acceptable to God" (Dumitrescu, 2022). Locke also highlighted the principles of tolerance as the foundation for stable social harmony, where individuals and religious groups must respect and recognize each other's religious rights and freedoms. This opinion is also supported by Gianni's research, which says that cultural and ethnic diversity is not only a social fact but also a moral value (Gianni, 2023). He argues that recognizing and protecting diversity is essential for justice in a multicultural society. Similarly, Parekh in Boucher's study *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* emphasizes the need for an inclusive approach to accommodate cultural differences, advocating intercultural dialogue as a means to build mutual understanding and respect (Boucher et al., 2023).

The importance of interfaith dialogue and tolerance is particularly relevant when analysing the values embedded in adat practices and rituals, such as those found in local traditions in Maluku or other regions. Locke's contribution to the philosophical foundation of tolerance is particularly significant in this context, as it supports the notion that religious and cultural diversity should not only be tolerated but actively respected and integrated into the social fabric. Adat practices, with their emphasis on community, respect, and mutual understanding, offer a framework through which these philosophical ideals can be realized, thereby promoting social harmony and peace in diverse settings like Indonesia.

Khodaverdian in "Islam and Democracy" argue that religious harmony can be achieved through interfaith dialogue and cooperation on social issues (Khodaverdian, 2022). They emphasize that a shared understanding of human values can bridge religious differences. Atkinson observes that Indonesia's long history of pluralism is a vital asset in building and maintaining religious harmony (Atkinson, 2019). He suggests that traditional values emphasizing harmony and togetherness are crucial for peaceful coexistence in a diverse society.

Previous research by Hutapea and Iswanto on pluralism and harmony in NTT (Hutapea & Iswanto, 2020), and by Almufadda on fostering tolerance in plural societies, has provided valuable insights into managing diversity (Almufadda et al., 2020). However, these studies did not focus on regions that have experienced significant religious conflicts. This research on Waraka, therefore, fills a gap by examining how a community in Maluku maintains harmony despite the historical and ongoing conflicts in the region.

In the local context of Waraka, which is home to Christian, Muslim, and Catholic communities, traditional practices such as the "ronda kambing" (goat ronda) play a significant role in fostering interfaith harmony. This tradition is observed during religious holidays, particularly the sacrificial holiday, when the Ustad and his congregation, alongside the Waraka patriarch and the entire community, walk around the village carrying goats to the mosque. Beyond this, there are also activities such as the construction of houses of worship, joint celebrations of religious holidays, and collective prayers that further demonstrate the strong values of tolerance within the community. The Waraka community actively engages all religious groups in these customary and religious activities, creating opportunities for dialogue, mutual respect for diverse beliefs, and interfaith cooperation. The Theory of Religious Tolerance is essential in analyzing this phenomenon, emphasizing the recognition of religious diversity, the practice of active tolerance, and the importance of interfaith participation in shared ceremonies. As Tskhadaia explains, in a multicultural context, positive interactions between religious groups help to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation, both of which are crucial for building sustainable social harmony (Tskhadaia, 2021). These concepts not only shed light on local practices but also offer a framework for understanding the social dynamics in communities with diverse religious beliefs, such as Waraka.

The findings of this study can provide new insights into the values and practices that sustain religious harmony in Waraka. These insights could be useful for policymakers, community leaders, and scholars interested in fostering harmony in diverse societies. By understanding the specific strategies and cultural values that promote harmony in Waraka, this research could contribute to

broader efforts to manage diversity and prevent conflict in other multicultural settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is a method that produces data in the form of descriptions or oral from informants observed in research (L.J. Moleong, 2005). This research will produce descriptive, factual, and accurate data about the phenomena observed. The focus of this research is religious diversity and the values of harmony embedded in the local traditions of the people of Negeri Waraka. In data collection, the researcher employed three main methods: in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including the Bapa Raja of Negeri Waraka and his wife, religious leaders from various faiths (Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam), the Bapa Raja's daughter-in-law from Manado, and members of the Christian, Catholic, and Muslim communities in Negeri Waraka. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences regarding religious diversity and coexistence in Negeri Waraka. The interviews took place at the Bapa Raja's residence, using a set of questions designed specifically to explore two main aspects: religious diversity and interfaith harmony within the local traditions of the Waraka community. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were then reviewed repeatedly and organized according to the two main themes: religious diversity and interfaith harmony, in line with the research focus. To complement the data needed, researchers also made direct observations in local tradition events held in Waraka country. In this activity, the researcher observed: 1) The reflection of religious diversity in the tradition, 2) The participation and contribution of various religious communities in organizing rituals or joint celebrations, 3) The promotion of understanding, respect, and cooperation between communities through these interactions, and 4) The presence of interfaith dialogue practices or educational initiatives that strengthen the understanding of the values of other religions within the tradition. In addition, the researcher also conducted a document review including photos of activities and supporting literature regarding local traditional activities of the community in Negeri Waraka obtained through Facebook social media accounts and online media. This research was conducted in Negeri Waraka in 2021. All data collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews will be analysed using the theory of religion and harmony discussed in the previous theoretical study. Data analysis was carried out using analytical techniques developed by Miles and Huberman through the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Land of Waraka

Waraka, located in the South of Seram Island, Central Maluku Regency, is a place that tantalises with its natural beauty (Lailossa, 2021). Here, traditions and customs are still carefully preserved. The results of the researcher's interview with the father of the King of Negeri Waraka, in 2021, revealed the religious diversity that lives harmoniously in the Waraka community. Protestant Christianity, Islam, and Catholicism are the three religious communities that coexist, with the majority adhering to Protestant Christianity. Despite different faiths, Waraka has carved out a long story of tolerance and harmony over the centuries.

Waraka's history reflects a journey of religious transformation and enduring harmony. Initially unfamiliar with Christianity, the community embraced it after King Adrian Lailossa's baptism in 1904. Migrants from Dulla, Kei Besar, introduced Islam in 1929, marked by H. Usman Rentua making a coffin for King Hermanus Lailossa. Catholicism arrived in 1988 under King Alexander Lelisa Lailossa.

Despite religious diversity, Waraka has maintained strong interfaith unity. During the 1999 unrest, King Alexander safeguarded Muslims, some evacuated to Masohi, while others stayed under Christian protection. Christians guarded the mosque, and Muslims guarded the church, with outsiders barred to ensure safety.

Traditions like joint prayers, Ronda Kambing, and Natsar Negeri uphold harmony, offering a model for interfaith coexistence in Indonesia.

Building a House of Worship

The interfaith cooperation in Negeri Waraka offers a powerful model for communities worldwide. Home to Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics, Waraka exemplifies peaceful coexistence through collaboration in building houses of worship. A notable example is the construction of the Al-Jihad Mosque, where members of all three faiths worked together, including a monumental effort to lift the dome from the harbor. Father King highlighted this tradition as a reflection of Waraka's deep commitment to unity and harmony (Lailossa, 2021). Media coverage further emphasized how shared values foster interfaith solidarity (Matamaluku.com, 2021).

The practice of building places of worship together in Waraka reflects global values of tolerance, respect for diversity, and cooperation, essential for harmony in religiously diverse societies. As Maurer and Gellera highlight, religious tolerance involves negotiating beliefs in political and moral spaces, a critical element for peacebuilding in pluralistic societies (Maurer & Gellera, 2020).. Waraka's collaborative model demonstrates how mutual respect and shared goals foster peaceful coexistence. Waraka's collaborative model exemplifies how religious groups can respect each other's beliefs while working together for common goals, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence.

Blakemore emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue in resolving religious conflicts and promoting peace, particularly in diverse nations like Indonesia (Blakemore, 2019). Waraka's joint efforts in constructing worship spaces and celebrating religious events showcase how interfaith collaboration strengthens social cohesion and resilience.

Waraka's tradition of collaboratively building houses of worship exemplifies how local customs can foster interfaith tolerance. As Rusydi and Zolehah highlight, interfaith harmony stems from mutual respect, cooperation, and collective action, not merely formal policies (Rusydi & Zolehah, 2018). This practice serves as a blueprint for addressing religious tensions globally, demonstrating that local interfaith cooperation can catalyze social inclusion and peaceful coexistence.

Globally, examples like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where communities rebuild places of worship post-conflict, and Amritsar, where Sikhs welcome all faiths into their spaces, underscore the power of interfaith collaboration (Jagiello-Szostak & Kulska, 2020). Organizations like the UN's Alliance of Civilizations and educational initiatives further reinforce interfaith dialogue and understanding (Nielsen, 2002).

Waraka's approach offers a practical model for communities worldwide to transcend differences, collaborate on shared goals, and build inclusive, peaceful societies, demonstrating the universal potential of interfaith harmony.

Recognition of Religious Diversity

Religious tolerance has evolved through philosophical and theological debates, with Maurer and Gellera highlighting its roots in 17th and 18th-century discussions on religious freedom, church-state relations, and faith recognition. They argue that tolerance extends beyond acceptance to active engagement in political and moral contexts (Maurer & Gellera, 2020). This principle is exemplified in Negeri Waraka, where the construction of houses of worship, such as the Al-Jihad Mosque, involves collaborative efforts from Islamic, Protestant Christian, and Catholic communities. This tradition reflects not mere tolerance but the valuing of religious diversity as integral to the community's social fabric.

Active tolerance of Waraka

Maurer and Gellera emphasize that tolerance involves active participation with other faiths (Maurer & Gellera, 2020). In Negeri Waraka, interfaith collaboration in building the Al-Jihad Mosque and joint celebrations strengthens trust and fosters unity. According to Father King of Waraka, this tradition has been passed down for generations, reinforcing cooperative bonds and promoting social cohesion.

Interfaith collaboration and Dialogue

Interfaith collaboration in Negeri Waraka not only achieves shared goals but also nurtures mutual respect. Local media coverage of the Al-Jihad Mosque construction highlights how such efforts are integral to the community, laying the groundwork for peace and understanding. Blakemore underscores the role of interfaith dialogue in reducing identity-based conflicts (Blakemore, 2019). In Waraka, dialogue and joint activities deepen mutual understanding and reduce prejudice, exemplifying a sustainable model for harmony in diverse societies.

Celebration of Religious Holidays

Religious holidays are joyful occasions for believers across different faiths. In Negeri Waraka, a tradition of house-to-house visits during religious holidays brings together people from Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholicism. Wife of the King of Waraka, shared that the tradition of breaking the fast together, involving multiple religious communities, has been passed down for generations. She emphasized that the iftar event is not only about food but also about strengthening social ties between different faiths (Rini, 2022).

At Eid al-Fitr, Christian families visit their Muslim neighbors, a practice rooted in Waraka's history. Religious leaders from all faiths also visit each other, fostering friendship and forgiveness. Haji Ahmad, a respected Muslim figure, explained that Eid is a time to share blessings with neighbors, regardless of their religion (Ahmad, 2021). Photos shared by Mrs. Rini on social media further illustrate these interfaith interactions, showing the community celebrating together during various religious holidays.

The Muslim community also actively participates in Christian and Catholic holidays. For instance, they help secure Christmas celebrations and join in singing and dancing. One Muslim resident highlighted that celebrating Christmas with Christian neighbors has become an integral part of their cultural heritage (Muslimah, 2021). Regina, the daughter-in-law of the king, also pointed out that Waraka ensures all religions have space to pray during religious events, preserving harmony (Regina, 2022).

Such interfaith collaboration is not unique to Waraka. Global studies, like one from the Pew Research Center, show that communities where diverse faiths coexist peacefully experience less religious conflict and more social trust (Hackett et al., 2015). The United Nations also recognizes the importance of interfaith dialogue for fostering global peace (Haynes, 2019). The example of Waraka illustrates how celebrating religious holidays together can strengthen unity and cooperation among different faiths, offering a model for other communities to embrace. These practices help build more cohesive societies by promoting mutual respect and understanding.

Recognition of Religious Diversity

Traditions in Negeri Waraka reflect strong recognition of religious diversity. As John Locke argued, religious tolerance involves respecting individuals' rights to practice their religion without coercion (Dumitrescu, 2022). In Waraka, people of different faiths actively participate in each other's religious celebrations, such as Muslim families visiting Christian neighbors during Eid al-Fitr, and Christians joining in Christmas festivities. This mutual respect supports the idea of religious freedom and the importance of recognizing diversity (Jahn & Brühl, 2018; Parra-Ayala, 2023). Research by Aرسال and Malovic highlights that recognizing religious diversity fosters a peaceful and harmonious society (Arsal et al., 2023; Malović & Vujica, 2021).

Interfaith Participation and Contribution

One important aspect of the Theory of Religious Tolerance is the active participation of various religious communities in joint activities. The tradition of breaking the fast together in Negeri Waraka, which involves people from three religious communities, shows interfaith participation. Mrs Rini, the wife of the King of Negeri Waraka, emphasises that this event is not only a place to gather and share food, but also strengthens social ties between religious communities (Rini, 2022). Similarly, during Christmas celebrations, Muslim communities not only attend but also help secure the event and participate in activities such as dance and Qasidah. This interfaith participation reflects a commitment to tolerance and inclusiveness, and strengthens social cohesion in society,

as stated by Fathorrahman (Fathorrahman, 2019). Aditya and Kruja also emphasised that contributions from different religious communities in joint activities can reduce prejudice and increase mutual understanding (Aditya & Mayasari, 2022; Kruja, 2022).

Promotion of Inter-Community Understanding, Respect and Cooperation

Religious celebrations in Waraka promote understanding and respect between communities, aligned with philosophical views on religious tolerance. Maurer and Gellera argue that tolerance evolved through historical debates on religious freedom, which inform today's interfaith practices in Waraka (Maurer & Gellera, 2020). Blakemore highlights the role of interfaith dialogue in reducing conflicts, especially in religiously diverse countries like Indonesia (Blakemore, 2019). These positive interactions during holidays contribute to building mutual trust and respect, reducing prejudice and fostering cooperation (Alam, 2023; Fathorrahman, 2019) (Alam, 2023; Fathorrahman, 2019).

Interfaith Dialogue and Educational Initiatives

Waraka's traditions also demonstrate a commitment to interfaith dialogue and educational efforts to promote understanding of other religions. Regina, the daughter-in-law of Bapak Raja Waraka, emphasizes that each religious event includes prayers from leaders of all three faiths, strengthening interfaith harmony (Regina, 2022). Kruja and Mokotso stress that such dialogue and educational initiatives are essential for building respect and tolerance, as they allow communities to learn about each other's beliefs and practices (Kruja, 2022; Mokotso, 2024).

Ronda Kambing

The "Ronda Kambing" tradition in Negeri Waraka is a unique Eid al-Adha celebration that highlights religious tolerance and interfaith collaboration. After Eid prayers, the community gathers at the Father King's House to begin the ritual, where a goat is selected for sacrifice. Elders recite prayers, and the community rubs money or spice leaves on the goat to "remove bad luck." Villagers of all ages and genders then carry the goat around the village, reflecting unity and faith. The procession culminates in a seven-time circumambulation around the mosque, similar to the Hajj pilgrimage, before the goat is slaughtered inside the mosque. During this act, community members throw money into the cutting area as a symbolic gesture of spiritual cleansing.

This tradition is a manifestation of social cohesion and shared spiritual values. According to Bapa Raja Lailossa, the leader of Waraka, the ritual symbolizes unity, as people from different backgrounds come together in shared practice. Islamic leader echoed this sentiment, emphasizing mutual respect among the community members of all faiths. A Christian from Waraka, described the tradition as an expression of gratitude, emphasizing the inclusivity of the ritual (Regina, 2022). These perspectives illustrate the community's deep commitment to religious harmony and collaboration.

The "Ronda Kambing" tradition exemplifies Maurer and Gellera's notion that tolerance goes beyond accepting differences; it involves actively mediating and engaging with these differences in meaningful ways (Maurer & Gellera, 2020). The tradition encourages participation from all religious groups, fostering dialogue and social cohesion. Studies support that such inclusive rituals strengthen community ties and promote interfaith understanding (Essomba et al., 2023; Perveen, 2018; Siahaya et al., 2023).

Blakemore highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue in reducing religious conflict, and "Ronda Kambing" aligns with these principles, offering a model for religious diplomacy in diverse societies like Indonesia (Blakemore, 2019)(Blakemore, 2019). By actively engaging in each other's rituals, the Waraka community exemplifies how shared religious practices can foster peace and unity. This collaborative approach reflects a broader global effort to promote interfaith dialogue as a tool for global peace (Haynes, 2019).

Enhancing Understanding, Respect, and Co-operation

Interactions during the "Ronda Kambing" ritual promote understanding, respect, and co-operation between communities. Maurer and Gellera argue that tolerance involves more than mere acceptance; it requires actively engaging with and learning from other religious perspectives

(Maurer & Gellera, 2020). Symbolic acts of unity in this ritual, such as circumambulating the mosque seven times, similar to the Thawaf ritual in Hajj, demonstrate mutual respect and solidarity among participants. These shared practices serve as opportunities to deepen understanding and foster respect between different religious communities.

Contemporary scholars emphasise that such interactions help reduce stereotypes and build cooperative relationships based on shared values of peace and harmony. By engaging in joint religious activities, participants develop empathy, which is crucial for establishing enduring interfaith relationships (Pamir et al., 2023; Wahyu Aji et al., 2023). These shared rituals create spaces where mutual respect is nurtured, contributing to social cohesion and the reduction of tensions.

Interfaith Dialogue and Educational Initiatives

The "Ronda Kambing" tradition implicitly includes interfaith dialogue and educational elements that enhance understanding of other religions. Blakemore emphasises the importance of interfaith dialogue as a means of fostering peaceful coexistence in countries with high religious diversity, such as Indonesia (Blakemore, 2019). In this context, the ritual practices of the community, such as joint prayers and symbolic gestures, serve as educational opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of each other's beliefs and practices. By participating in these shared rituals, individuals are exposed to the spiritual and cultural aspects of other religions, thereby broadening their understanding and tolerance.

Recent research underscores the importance of structured interfaith dialogue and educational initiatives in fostering mutual respect and promoting peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies (Labrecque & Grushcow, 2024; Thameem, 2024; William Wilson, 1999). These initiatives, which are central to the "Ronda Kambing" tradition, offer a model for how interfaith education and dialogue can be embedded in everyday practices, enhancing social harmony and reducing religious conflict.

Natsar Negeri

The Waraka community maintains a unique annual tradition on December 31, known as the "natsar negeri," where married people from various religious backgrounds—Muslim, Protestant Christian, and Catholic—gather to express gratitude to God. This tradition is typically held at Upulatu's residence, and the King of Waraka, together with village officials, submits the natsar to the church in early January. The most recent natsar event, held in March 2021, was led by King Rischard Y. B. Lailossa and involved participation from Waraka residents as well as people from neighboring regions, fostering a sense of unity across diverse communities.

Religious tolerance in Waraka is not merely a slogan but a practice visible in daily life. Direct observations and interviews with the community, including Christian members like Mrs. Regina and Mrs. Rini, show that the tradition symbolizes togetherness despite religious differences. Regina emphasized that the Natsar is a "symbol of our togetherness as followers of different religions," reflecting the deep respect between Muslims, Christians, and Catholics in Waraka (Regina, 2022). Mrs. Rini also shared that in Waraka, "religious differences do not become an obstacle for us to remain united in harmony" (Rini, 2022).

The tradition aligns with John Locke's idea that "the toleration of those who differ from others in religion is perfectly in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and with human reason" (Dumitrescu, 2022). Waraka's practice echoes this respect for diversity and serves as a local manifestation of Indonesia's motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

The Natsar Negeri tradition in Waraka is a powerful testament to the inclusive and tolerant spirit of the community, where religious diversity is not just accepted but celebrated. This practice of unity amidst difference resonates with global ideas of peace, as highlighted by Mahatma Gandhi's assertion that "tolerance is the first principle of community" (Dey, 2021), and John Haynes's belief that "interfaith dialogue and cooperation are essential for creating a peaceful, harmonious global society" (Haynes, 2019). The tradition underscores the strength found in unity and mutual respect, serving as a beacon of hope for global religious coexistence.

Participation and Contribution in Rituals

This tradition involves the active participation and contribution of different religious communities in organising rituals and celebrations together. This is in line with Locke's view that tolerance involves not only passive acceptance, but also active engagement and co-operation among different religious groups. Locke advocated a society where "every man has a right of property in himself" and this includes the freedom to participate in religious activities without discrimination (Dumitrescu, 2022). The participation of various communities in Natsar Negeri rituals, such as joint celebrations and ceremonial contributions, illustrates this active engagement.

Promoting Understanding and Co-operation

Interactions within Natsar Negeri promote understanding, respect and co-operation among different religious communities. Locke argues that through respectful engagement and dialogue, communities can build mutual understanding and cooperation. This is essential for maintaining peace and harmony. Locke's belief that "the mutual consent of men entering into society" requires respect for religious differences underlies the spirit of co-operation seen in the State Statutes (Dumitrescu, 2022). The peaceful coexistence and unity amidst religious diversity in Waraka is an example of this principle.

Interfaith Dialogue and Educational Initiatives

There are practices of interfaith dialogue and educational initiatives in Natsar Negeri that strengthen understanding of the values of other religions. Locke emphasises the importance of education and open discourse in fostering tolerance and harmony. He argued that "such tolerance is the chief feature of the true Church" (Dumitrescu, 2022). At Natsar Negeri, initiatives to educate the younger generation about religious values and practices of different religions contribute to maintaining and enhancing interfaith understanding and respect.

This tradition not only acknowledges religious diversity but also actively engages different communities in rituals, promotes understanding and cooperation among them, and encourages interfaith dialogue and educational efforts. These practices ensure that despite religious differences, the community upholds unity and mutual respect, aligning with Locke's vision of a tolerant society where individuals are free to practice their faith without fear of persecution.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals the importance of religious diversity and tolerance in creating inclusive and peaceful societies, using the Waraka community in Central Maluku, Seram Island, as a case study. Despite significant religious differences—Protestant Christianity, Islam, and Catholicism—the Waraka community has successfully built interfaith harmony. Religious practices involving cross-faith participation, such as the joint construction of places of worship, communal religious celebrations, and traditions like Natsar Negeri and "Ronda Kambing," demonstrate that true tolerance involves not just passive acceptance, but also active involvement in celebrating diversity.

Overall, the findings of this research show that recognition and appreciation of religious diversity are key elements in building social peace and harmonious relationships among religious communities. The Waraka community exemplifies that religious differences need not be a barrier to creating strong communal bonds, reflected in inclusive social and religious practices. Through interfaith dialogue, cross-religious collaboration, and active involvement in shared traditions, the Waraka community has strengthened solidarity and fostered deep social ties, creating a harmonious environment for all faiths.

At the global level, this research also highlights the relevance of active tolerance in addressing the increasing challenges of religious diversity. While religious diversity often becomes a source of tension and conflict in many countries, the model applied in Waraka demonstrates that active acceptance of diversity can foster social peace and reduce prejudice among religious groups. In a world that is increasingly interconnected and pluralistic, inclusive approaches like those practiced in Waraka provide a crucial foundation for building global solidarity, strengthening

interfaith relationships, and creating peaceful societies.

This research makes a significant contribution to the global understanding of managing religious diversity in pluralistic societies. By highlighting practices of diversity and active tolerance within the Waraka community, this study offers a model that can be applied in other countries or communities facing similar challenges related to religious diversity. The main contribution of this research lies in the development of the concept of active tolerance—not merely passive acceptance—which can inspire global communities to create dialogue, cooperation, and interfaith understanding in order to strengthen social peace. In the context of an increasingly plural world, these findings can serve as a reference for policies and initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive, peaceful, and harmonious world.

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are proposed for policymakers and relevant stakeholders to foster interfaith harmony and effectively manage religious diversity in pluralistic societies. First, governments and community leaders should prioritize active tolerance, going beyond passive acceptance of religious diversity to encourage proactive engagement through interfaith dialogues and collaborative community activities. Programs that promote cross-faith participation, such as joint religious celebrations and community service projects, should be expanded, similar to those practiced in the Waraka community. Additionally, local governments should support the creation of shared religious spaces where different faiths can worship together, as this fosters unity and mutual understanding. Schools and universities should implement educational curricula emphasizing religious tolerance, cultural diversity, and the benefits of harmonious coexistence, while organizing interfaith workshops to build empathy and challenge religious stereotypes. Policymakers should also design laws and policies that encourage inclusivity, religious freedom, and interfaith cooperation, ensuring that religious minorities are not marginalized. On a global level, governments and international organizations should collaborate to promote interfaith understanding and collaboration, using the Waraka community's model as a best practice. Lastly, the government and non-governmental organizations should provide support for local communities, demonstrating successful interfaith cooperation, helping to scale their initiatives, and serving as models for other communities. These recommendations aim to create a more inclusive and tolerant society, fostering peace and unity both locally and globally.

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