Local Wisdom of the Lasem Community for Tolerance

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Abstract

Despite the widespread issue of intolerance in Indonesia, some regions can implement a harmonious life based on the values of Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. The area is Lasem City, Rembang Regency, which consists of a multicultural community of Javanese and Chinese ethnicities. Tolerance in the multicultural Lasem community has existed since ancient times. Diverse life in Lasem develops harmoniously with empathy based on local cultural values. Local culture with messages of local wisdom based on the community is necessary for a harmonious life in a multicultural society. This study aims to analyze the local wisdom of the Lasem community for harmonizing religious life. This research is qualitative research with a case study method. Data were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was performed using interactive analysis techniques: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The study results show that tolerance among Lasem people is intertwined in various aspects of life, religious life, social life, economy, politics, and culture. The local wisdom of the Lasem people is an important foundation for the community to create a harmonious life. The local wisdom that forms the basis of tolerance in Lasem includes historical stories of Lasem and teachings of Javanese-Islamic and Chinese-Confucian cultures. The values of local wisdom are proven to have a strategic role in harmonizing religious life in the Lasem community. The role of community leaders such as religious leaders and local government also holds a very high urgency in providing examples and advice related to local wisdom, always to be internalized and upheld by the community. The existence of local wisdom must always be preserved in modern society. To realize this, the role of stakeholders such as the government and community leaders is very important to work hand in hand so that local wisdom can continue to become the roots and philosophy of life for the community.

Keywords

Harmonious Life; Local Wisdom; Lasem; Tolerance; Chinese

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the largest multicultural country in the world, consisting of 1,705 islands, more than 1,300 ethnicities and nationalities, 7 religions and one other belief, 2,500 languages, and various races and groups (Statistics Indonesia, 2010). Diversity in Indonesia as a nation-state can simultaneously be pride and irony (Hendris & Riyadi, 2014). It can be pride because of the wide varieties of differentiation, which are rich and a portrait of Indonesian

multiculturalism. On the other hand, this diversity has become a disaster for the Indonesian people. Sectarian conflicts between ethnic groups, religions, races, groups, and beliefs can hardly be inevitable (Suparlan, 2002).

In 2020, there were 422 acts violating religious freedom in Indonesia. Of the 422 cases, 184 actions were from non-state actors, which included groups of citizens, individuals, and mass organizations. Intolerance is the violation of religious

freedom most often committed by non-state actors, with 64 acts. Then, there were 32 acts of reporting blasphemy against religion, 17 acts of refusal to establish places of worship, and 8 acts of violation of religious activities committed by non-state actors (Novianto, 2021).

Despite widespread the issue of intolerance in Indonesia, some regions can implement a harmonious life based on the values of Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. The area is Lasem (Atabik, 2016b; Burhanuddin, 2016). Lasem is an area on the north coast of Java Island and is one of the sub-districts in Rembang Regency, Central Java (Rembang Regency Government, 2016; Statistics Indonesia for Rembang, 2017b). Lasem is a city that has an amazing cultural heritage. It has many nicknames, one of which is la petit chinois or The Little China, because Lasem City is full of Chinese culture (Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

In addition to that nickname, Lasem City is known as the City of Santri (students who study in Islamic boarding schools) (Nurhajarini et al., 2015) because of the large number of students studying religion in Lasem with a total of 28 Islamic boarding schools and a total of 1190 students (Statistics Indonesia, 2017a). Therefore, the life of the indigenous Lasem community is thick with Islamic culture. The development of Islamic and Chinese cultures gave birth to cultural harmony between the two cultures (Atabik, 2016b; Rizali & Sudardi, 2016) so that the two of them could go hand in hand, making Lasem known as the City of Tolerance.

Tolerance in the multicultural Lasem community has existed since ancient times. The community can address multiculturalism in Lasem well so that a friendly, peaceful, harmonious life can be created while mutually upholding the values of tolerance. The Lasem people believe that diversity is God Almighty's will

for humans to develop their personalities. It will help them in becoming tolerant human beings, uphold human rights, and live up to religious teachings to love one another among human beings even though they differ in belief and religion, ethnicity, or race. This can serve as an example for other communities in developing harmonization of religion in their area (Astuti et al., 2019).

life in Diverse Lasem develops harmoniously with empathy based on local cultural values. This is reflected in various social, economic, and daily interactions between Javanese, Chinese and Arab ethnic groups, which are very peaceful and mutually respectful (Astuti et al., 2019). A local culture that contains messages of local wisdom based on community consensus is necessary for realizing a harmonious life in multicultural society. In addition, religious aspects that contain dogma-based moral messages are also very important in realizing community harmony (Purna, 2016).

Several studies state the important role of local wisdom in creating a tolerant life in a pluralistic society. Purna's research (2016) has discussed the importance of local wisdom in fostering a tolerant religious life among Mbawa, NTT. Takdir's research (2018) has also discussed the important role of local Madurese wisdom in realizing a harmonious life through the phrase "Rampak Naong Bringen Korong." Or another study from Nurfitri (2017) regarding the religious tolerance of the Javanese people with the slogans Tepa Selira and Empan Papan. From the description above, the researcher intends to study the local wisdom of the multicultural Lasem community harmonize religious life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to analyze the local wisdom of the Lasem community for harmonizing religious life. This research was conducted in Lasem City, Rembang Regency, Central Java. This research is qualitative research with a case study method. This study does not aim to test a theory but to explain the research topic comprehensively.

Data were collected using observation, interview, and documentation methods. The observation was conducted directly in Lasem City to find out the forms of local wisdom that were firmly held by the community using participatory the observation method, in which researchers placed themselves as part of the community to observe people's behavior and life naturally. Some important points observed behavior, people's interactions between multicultural communities, and social, economic, and religious activities carried out by people in everyday life. These observations were also intended to find other local wisdom in the form of traditions or routine activities usually carried out by the community. The tool used to collect data from observations was an observation sheet.

Interviews were conducted to obtain indepth or detailed data regarding forms of local wisdom that were rooted and firmly held by the Lasem community. The tool used in the interview was a list of interview questions. Interviews were conducted in a structured manner, with several sources selected purposively. Researchers chose informants who were considered the most knowledgeable about the topic of study. Some selected sources were Islamic religious leaders, figures from the Chinese community, Lasem historical activists, and the general public. The number of informants was not determined at the beginning of the study. The number of sources was considered representative or sufficient when the data reached redundancy.

Documentation was performed to obtain more detailed data regarding local wisdom

in Lasem City from various sources and times. Documentation was conducted by studying documents from the government, books, and articles from previous research journals. It was also carried out by studying documents at various historical sites in Lasem, which provided information about local wisdom in Lasem that had existed for a long time. In addition, the internet was used for searching for documents online. The tools used in the documentation method were documentation sheets.

The data validity test in this study was carried out using the source triangulation method by comparing the answers or data obtained from one informant with another. The data analysis technique used in this research is the interactive analysis technique. The data was analyzed using interactive models (Miles and Huberman, 1992). the process, three In main components really must be understood and considered by every researcher: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The analysis was done continuously following the problems studied until the right conclusions were obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Tolerance between Religions in Lasem City

The multicultural Lasem community has a harmonious relationship due to the tolerance values they adopt. The Lasem community consists of ethnic Chinese and Javanese people. They have different religious backgrounds; some are Muslim, Confucian, Buddhist, Christian. Catholic. Amid this multiculturalism, Lasem people can still establish harmonious relationships, work together, help, and synergize with each other. The tolerance relationship between the multicultural Lasem community has existed since ancient times. Since the arrival of the Chinese nation in 1413, the Chinese community has been well-received by the people of Lasem. They can establish work relations and even take charge in governmental places with the Javanese community. Tolerance among the Lasem people is intertwined in various aspects of life, religious life, social life, economy, politics, and culture.

Tolerance in Religious Life in Lasem Community

The Lasem community highly upholds freedom of religion for the whole community. Everyone is free to carry out religious activities without interference from members of other religions. Further, Lasem people often share and work together in religious activities. The existence of cooperation among religious communities in Lasem also concerns the activities of religious celebrations in each religion as long as it is still within limits determined by religion.

An example is the celebration of Eid al-Fitr for Muslims. In the celebration, all people participate in the event even though they have different religions. It is a form of respect for differences in beliefs, for instance, by joining them in visiting each other's houses and helping the needy. In addition, similar conditions also happen during Eid al-Adha, Mauludan, tahlilan, social activities, Chinese New Year celebrations, Christmas, and Nyepi. Further, it is also the same for a death ceremony as a form of condolences and marriage as a form of joy among religious people. However, the participation of people of different religions is only limited to the preparation of the activity and after the activity ends as a limit for religious tolerance so it will not interfere with the sharia of other religions. Even so, these activities are a natural form of religious unity in Lasem.

Another example is that during the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the Muslim community often distributes blessed rice and other foods to the non-Muslim Chinese community. Including when commemorating Buddhist holidays, the Buddhist community sends food to the surrounding community and Islamic religious leaders at Islamic boarding Likewise, when celebrating schools. Christmas or Chinese New Year. Sharing is a tradition of the religious community in Lasem.

Not only that, in terms of religious traditions and rituals, there is acculturation and assimilation between Islamic cultures and other religions. For example, in the Kenduri tradition (slametan), which is usually done to welcome the birth of a child, commemorate a death, or celebrate a wedding. Kenduri is an Islamic tradition of praying together. Currently, the Kenduri tradition is being followed by non-Islamic Chinese. They often invite the ustad (a religious teacher) to lead the prayers at the festivities. The prayers offered are Islamic prayers (in Arabic). Lasem Chinese people believe that God will accept prayers even if they are in various languages.

Tolerance and Cooperation of the Lasem Community in Economic Activities

Tolerance and economic cooperation among the people of Lasem have existed for a long time. There is a relationship of mutual need between Chinese and Javanese communities in economic activities. The Chinese community is the owner of capital who has economic businesses in various fields that require labor. On the other hand, the Javanese people need jobs to make ends meet. This mutual need relationship then gave birth to the interdependence between the Javanese and Chinese communities.

This relationship is reflected in the Batik Lasem industry, owned by the Chinese

community. The Lasem Batik industry always needs Javanese workers as batik craftsmen who cannot be found elsewhere because they require special skills. Apart from that, a relationship of mutual need is also formed in other economic activities, especially the trading business, which is often engaged in by the Chinese Further, community. the economic cooperation relations between the Javanese-Chinese people are increasingly significant with the existence of the tourism industry in Lasem City. Lasem is becoming a tourist destination that many tourists visit with its distinctive Javanese-Islamic-Chinese culture. For this reason, in practice, cooperation between the Javanese and Chinese communities is getting closer.

Tolerance in Culture in Lasem Community

Acculturation and origination have graced various aspects of Lasem people's lives. First, in terms of language. Language auite significant in actualizing acculturation. In contrast to the Chinese in Sumatra and Kalimantan, who still faithfully use Mandarin, the Chinese in Lasem is fluent in using the Javanese language even though the Javanese language is ngoko alus. However, it is not uncommon among those who master the Javanese krama inggil. Javanese Indonesian have become the everyday languages of the Chinese in Lasem. Even the Chinese language has influenced the dialect of the Lasem people. The Lasem dialects are as follows: -em / -nem = your (English). Example: Bukuem/Bukunem = Your book, Tanganem Your hand, Nggonem/Nggonanem = Yours. Then there is also the dialect -leh = toh (Indonesian). Example: *Piye leh iki*? = How about this?, *Ndi* leh bukune? = Where is the book anyway? In addition, the word Lasem also fact comes from the Mandarin "Lao Sam" (Nurhajarini et al., 2015)

Second, in terms of architecture. In Lasem City, many distinctive architectures Chinese architecture, Javanese blend architecture (Coastal and Mataraman), and the influence of Dutch colonial architecture, which has developed over time. This architectural acculturation can be found in various buildings in Lasem, including houses, places of worship, tombs, and even security posts. An example architecture on the door of Gus Zaim's house, one of the clerics who owns an Islamic boarding school in Kauman Lasem, which has Mandala ventilation and is inscribed in Mandarin. Then Mbah Sambu's tomb is surrounded by buildings with Chinese architecture combined Javanese architecture. The acculturation of the oldest architecture can be seen in the Jami' Lasem Mosque, a blend of Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic cultures, which can be seen at the top of the mosque.

Third, in the art of Batik Lasem. Batik Lasem is an acculturation of Javanese, Chinese, and Islamic cultures. As coastal batik, Batik Lasem has characteristics not found in other batiks, especially in its pattern and color. Batik Lasem has bright and varied colors, especially the most popular is the red color called red *getih pitik* (chicken blood), which is synonymous with Chinese culture. Batik Lasem also has brown and blue soga colors, characteristic of Javanese colors, and green, which reflects Islamic culture.

Regarding patterns, Batik Lasem has ones resulting from a combination of Chinese and Javanese cultures, especially typical Chinese flora and fauna motifs such as dragon motifs, phoenixes, phoenix flowers, peacocks, and so on. Javanese motifs include *latohan* motifs, broken stones, machetes, and so on. These motifs and colors contain Javanese and Chinese cultural philosophies and values.

Fourth, in terms of people's names. Acculturation is also seen in the use of Javanese names by people of Chinese descent. The Chinese use elements that sound similar to the typical name elements that reflect Javanese ones. There are also differences in the use of name elements due to differences in ethnic background, so the combinations in names are adjusted with meaning to suit Chinese names. Example: Hung/Angbecome Anggoro, Anggakusuma; Oei, Oey (Wi-) became Winata, Winarto, and Wijaya; Chou (Zhou/Shou) became Subagyo, Sumitro; Han becomes Handoko, Handoyo, and so on (Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

Tolerance in Politics in Lasem Community

Tolerance among Lasem people in the political field has been formed since ancient times. A concrete example is regarding the election of leaders in Lasem. The Lasem people provide limited opportunities for anyone to become a leader regardless of ethnicity or both Chinese and Javanese. When Lasem was still a duchy—before its center was moved to Rembang by the VOC-Lasem was once led by an ethnic Chinese duke, Oei Ing Kiat. In the current era, positions in the scope of the village, such as Head of Neighborhood or Hamlet, are also filled by Chinese people. An example is what happened in the Kauman area, Karangturi Village.

Tolerance in Social Sector in Lasem Community

The tolerance of the Lasem community in the social field is reflected in the harmonious daily interactions of the people. Even though it consists of a multicultural society, the friendly and harmonious character of the Lasem community creates warm and intimate interactions. People are accustomed to gathering and interacting without any barriers between ethnic groups. Gatherings can be held at the home of one of

the residents, in a shop, in the village environment, or to greet each other on the street. Interaction runs harmoniously and *guyub* (peaceful). Forms of tolerance in the social field can also be seen in various events or community activities. For example, when community members hold a wedding ceremony (*hajatan*), the Lasem people come together to visit and rejoice. This also includes a death ceremony; lasem people also visit each other to express their condolences.

Local Wisdom Underlying Tolerance Between Multicultural Lasem Community Lasem History

Historical stories are the local wisdom that underlies or is firmly held by the Lasem community in tolerant interactions. The historical stories in question are stories and historical events in Lasem. In the Serat Badra Santi composed by Mpu Santi Badra, written in 1479 AD, which U.P Ramasharma S. Reksowardojo translated in 1966, it was stated that in 1351 AD, Lasem City was part of the Duchy of the Majapahit Empire, namely the Kadipeten Lasem. Lasem was the first-place Chinese traders set foot in Indonesia, in 1413 AD, to be precise. One of the ship captains of the imperial marine fleet of the Ming Dynasty in China, led by Admiral Cheng Ho named Bi Nang Un, landed with his wife Na Li Ni at Lasem Duchy Regol beach. At that time, the immigrants from China were Muslims. Since then, Chinese traders have started flocking to Lasem. In the following period, many of these immigrant groups were non-Muslims, some of whom were Confucianists, Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists. As time went by, they, together with the native people, built civilization in Lasem. They can live peacefully and harmoniously and work together without stereotypes and suspicion. Traces of their civilization can still be found

today in building architecture, art, traditions, religion, and other relics.

After the destruction of Majapahit in 1478, Lasem was ruled by an Islamic kingdom, namely the Kingdom of Demak. The collapse of Majapahit, followed by the collapse of Sriwijaya, became the right momentum for Islamic empires Indonesia to rise, one of which was in Java, namely the Kingdom of Demak. After the Demak Kingdom, Lasem was ruled by the Mataram and Pajang Kingdoms. In light of this, Lasem has also become a node in the network for spreading Islam, which can be seen from the presence of Islamic boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions. These Islamic boarding schools carry traditional customs with elements of Arabic culture, such as haul and manakib events, so Lasem is also called the "City of Santri". Lasem continued experience to development until, in 1741, Lasem, the capital of the duchy, was lowered to a common area after the VOC moved the center of the duchy to Rembang. After that, life in Lasem is still experiencing ups and downs and is dynamic until today (Nurhajarini et al., 2016).

The historical story above multiculturalism in the Lasem community, one of which is in religion. The religious diversity can be properly addressed by the Lasem community so that a friendly, peaceful, harmonious, and tolerant religious life can be created. The Lasem people believe that diversity is the will of God Almighty as a vessel for humans to develop their personalities to become tolerant, uphold human rights, and live up to religious teachings to love one another even though they differ in belief and religion.

Another historical story is closely related to the story of the struggle of the Lasem people against colonialists for centuries. In fighting the invaders, all elements of the Lasem community from different religions united and worked together to expel the Dutch colonial power in Lasem. The peak of the resistance of the Lasem people against the Dutch colonialists occurred during the Yellow War. At that time, Lasem was led by Adipati Lasem Oei Ing Kiat, Major Raden Panji Margono, and Tan Kee We, which ended in defeat for the Lasem people. Then, the story was immortalized in the Gie Yong Bio Temple to encourage harmony of religious life for the people of Lasem.

The teaching of Javanese Culture and Islam

Religious life in Lasem can run safely and peacefully because the people have a high sense of solidarity and tolerance. Interreligious people have relations in a social structure that need each other. This relationship occurs in the elite and community areas in everyday life. This mutual need is established because of economic, social, cultural, defense, and security cooperation.

The religious teachings of each religion teach human values to develop mutual love and affection for fellow human beings. In Islam, there is the teaching of tolerance by prioritizing the principle of ukhuwah wathoniyah (brotherhood over the common homeland). This means that even though the Lasem community consists of elements from ethnic Chinese or Javanese, from Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, or Hinduism, in reality, they are brothers and sisters in the homeland, Indonesia. Then, there is also the concept or principle of ukhuwah basyariyah (brotherhood among humans). This means that even though the community is different in terms of religion, ethnicity, or national origin, the community is still bound by a sense of brotherhood, as fellow human beings who are supposed to uphold one another's dignity and respect each other and work together.

In Islam, there is the *Tasamuh* principle, which means tolerance. Islam teaches that Allah SWT created humans consisting of nations and tribes so that they can know each other. It means humans can learn to understand each other, take lessons from one another, and work together for a harmonious life. Islamic teachings also teach humans to be tolerant and not forceful in matters of religion.

Another principle or teaching that Muslims believe in is the prohibition against hurting each other because of natural law. If you do not want to be hurt by others, then do not hurt others. Humans must not hurt each other to foster a peaceful and harmonious life. In Islam, the role of religious leaders is very important for teaching purposes. In addition, they also have a role in advising the community to develop tolerance attitudes mutually, providing examples towards society, mingling with different religions, and participating in deliberations for solving existing problems in Lasem.

Teachings of the Chinese or Confucian Community

In Confucianism, many views correlate with humanism (humanity), tolerance, morals, and human characteristics that are useful for community living. The Confucian teaches that every human being must have *Yen*, which implies they must have the qualities of goodness, character, love, and humanity. Confucianism teaches that humans should be God's creatures to love and cooperate with believers and non-believers.

Other teachings in Confucian culture are the teachings of *Satya* (*Tiong*) and *Kasih/Tepo Selira*. These two concepts or teachings mean that man must always uphold the word of *Thian* by doing the good bestowed by God, guarding the heart, and nurturing true character. That way, humans are not

darkened by lust and animal instincts. Then, humans must practice all goodness with compassion or *tepa selira* (tolerance).

Buddhism also has teachings to practice human behavior with fellow beings. Further, in Confucianism, there are also five principles of goodness: (a) REN/Jien, which means love and affection, which manifested in a warm and welcoming attitude; (2) Yi/Gi, which means upholding truth, justice, which is manifested in the form of a benevolent attitude of life; (3) Li/Lee which means decency which is manifested in an attitude of respect, (4) ZHI/Tie which wisdom means intelligence which is manifested in a simple attitude of life; and (5) XIN/Sien which means trustworthy which is manifested in a yielding attitude (Burhanuddin, 2016).

The role of the leaders in Lasem is very important in fostering a tolerant life there. They teach the importance of tolerance and provide the community with examples of a tolerant life. From the Javanese community, the pioneers of tolerance are Gus Zaim and Gus Afan. From the Chinese community, the pioneers of tolerance were the late Mr. Sigit, Mr. Gandor, the owner of the Oei House, and various sisters or nuns in the Church.

CONCLUSION

The multicultural Lasem community has a harmonious relationship due to the tolerance values they adopt. community consists of ethnic Chinese and Javanese people. Tolerance among the Lasem people is intertwined in various aspects of life, religious life, social life, economy, politics, and culture. In religious life, the Lasem community respects and helps each other in religious activities, including activities related to religious celebrations in each religion. However, this is still within limits determined by each religion, for example, in the activities of Eid

al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, *Maulid Nabi*, etc. In the economic field, tolerance is reflected in the cooperation between the Chinese and Javanese communities in the Batik Lasem industry, trading, and tourism activities. Then, the tolerance of culture among the people in Lasem can be seen clearly in the various acculturation and assimilation of cultures present there. In political activities in Lasem, there is no discrimination in politics. Every citizen, both Javanese and Chinese, has the same opportunity to occupy a political seat. In the social field, tolerance is reflected in the harmonious daily interactions of the Lasem community.

The local wisdom of the Lasem people is an important foundation for the community to create a harmonious life. The local wisdom that forms the basis of tolerance in Lasem includes historical stories of Lasem and teachings of Javanese-Islamic and Chinese-Confucian cultures. The historical stories in question are stories of the Lasem people's harmonious life that have existed since the 15th century. Another historical story is closely related to the story of the struggle of the Lasem people against colonialists for centuries. Further, the Javanese-Islamic cultural teachings that form the basis of tolerance are the principles of ukhuwah wathoniyah and ukhuwah basyariyah, the principles of tasamuh teachings, and also tepa selira.

Meanwhile, the teachings of the Chinese-Confucian community are related to views that correlate with humanism (humanity) or tolerance, morals, and human characteristics that are useful for the community. Besides that, other teachings in Confucian culture are the teachings of *Satya* (*Tiong*) and *Kasih/Tepo Selira*, as well as the teachings of the five principles of goodness. In addition, Buddhist teachings about compassion for fellow beings are also very important in underlying tolerance in Lasem.

The values of local wisdom are proven to have a strategic role in harmonizing religious life in the Lasem community. Local wisdom can become a guideline and foundation for the community to act and behave to maintain good relations with fellow human beings. The role of community leaders such as religious leaders and local government also holds a very high urgency in providing examples and advice related to local wisdom, always to be internalized and upheld by the community.

The existence of local wisdom must always be preserved in modern society. Local wisdom must always be echoed and internalized to coexist with modern life. Local wisdom and teachings of tolerance in Lasem will not be obsolete by modern science and culture. Local wisdom in the Lasem community can also teach people in other areas to foster a harmonious religious life. To realize this, the role of stakeholders such as the government and community leaders is very important to work hand in hand so that local wisdom can continue to become the roots and philosophy of life for the community.

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