

## Religious Harmony and Tolerance in Disruption Era: A Study of Local Wisdom in Watu Asa of Central Sumba

Suryaningsi Mila,<sup>1\*</sup> Solfina Lija Kolambani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*Sekolah Tinggi Teologia Gereja Kristen Sumba, Sumba Timur, Indonesia*

### Abstract

Intolerance has been a major concern in religious life in the disruption era. This current study aims to discuss local wisdom that has helped maintain religious harmony and tolerance in Watu Asa of Central Sumba. The study was qualitative and descriptive in nature, while the investigation was carried out through participatory observation on the dynamics of religious life and in-depth interviews with religious and traditional leaders in Watu Asa Village. The results of the investigation confirm that the three religious communities, i.e. Christians, Marapu, and Muslims, can coexist peacefully because of the local wisdom and strong kinship. The local wisdom embedded in the tradition of *tana nyuwu watu lissi*, *palomai* or *palonggamai*, *kalli kawana kalli kawinni*, *pandula wikki*, *mandara*, and *paoli*, promotes the values of love, respect, mutual cooperation, and acceptance of one another. Those values are believed to be a social cohesion that interconnects interreligious people, regardless of their geographical, ethnic, and gender differences. Taken together, these results highlight the importance of the values of local wisdom as counter-narratives against intolerant religious ideology.

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*Intoleransi telah menjadi keprihatinan utama dalam kehidupan beragama di era disrupsi. Kajian ini bermaksud ingin membahas kearifan lokal yang telah turut menjaga kerukunan dan toleransi umat beragama di Watu Asa, Sumba Tengah. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif-deskriptif dan dilaksanakan melalui observasi partisipatif terkait dinamika kehidupan beragama dan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan sejumlah tokoh agama dan tokoh adat di Desa Watu Asa. Selanjutnya, hasil investigasi di lapangan menemukan bahwa*

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\*Corresponding Author: Suryaningsih Mila (ningsih\_mila@yahoo.com), Jl. Pamatikarata-Lewa, Sumba Timur, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia 87152

*ketiga komunitas agama, yakni Kristen, Marapu, dan Muslim, dapat hidup berdampingan secara damai karena kearifan lokal dan rasa kekeluargaan yang kuat. Kearifan lokal yang tertanam dalam tradisi tana nyuwu watu lissi, palomai atau palonggamai, kalli kawana kalli kawinni, pandula wikki, mandara, dan paoli menghadirkan nilai-nilai cinta, hormat, gotong royong, dan penerimaan satu sama lain. Nilai-nilai tersebut diyakini menjadi kohesi sosial yang mampu menghubungkan seluruh umat beragama, tanpa memandang perbedaan geografis, etnis, dan gender. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya nilai-nilai kearifan lokal sebagai kontranarasi terhadap ideologi agama yang intoleran.*

**Keywords:** disruption era; harmony; local wisdom; tolerance

## Introduction

Nowadays, religious tolerance in Indonesia is threatened by the dissemination of disruptive religious ideologies and teachings through digital media. In the disruption era, religious people are vulnerable to hoaxes, intolerant teachings, and religious extremism. The emergence of disruptive religious teachings triggers intolerance among interreligious people in many places in Indonesia. The lack of critical thinking in responding to religious disruption causes the presence of extreme and intolerant religious groups who condemn religious tolerance. As a result, religious values that reflect Pancasila values are blurred by new religious values that are learned from online media including social media. This is the new phenomenon of the disruption era where many ideologies and teachings influence religious people's perspectives. In this context, many religious people choose to live in homogeneous groups because they avoid having clashes with other religious groups.

The disruption era is marked by the presence of the millennial generation who tend to consume things that are instant, non-process, the need for an exponential mindset, thus giving birth to what is called the era of the internet of things or which is known as artificial intelligence. This drastic change caused disruption of culture, disruption of thought patterns, and disruption of markets. In the context of Islam, the disruption

era has also presented new challenges for moderate Islam in Indonesia. The presence of radical, intolerant and extreme Islamic teaching through digital media targeting millennials is an inevitable fact. By this, moderate Islamic groups must be more active in using digital media as a place for spreading Islamic teachings based on the values of equality, peace, and justice (Wahyudi, 2018). Furthermore, in a religious context, the disruption era has led to the increase of extremism and radicalism through digital media. In fact, the existence of religion is being threatened by the presence of various “deviant” religious teaching content through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other online media such as YouTube. According to her, religious fanaticism groups often use the media as tools of spreading an ideology that attracts followers, and usually, the targets are the millennial generation (Nurish, 2019).

Amid the strengthening of religious disruption, it is important to explore the local wisdom that supports peace and tolerance. Ani Rostiyati in her research in Cigugur, Kuningan found that *seren taun* tradition, a harvest festival has contributed to the practice of tolerance. Interestingly, people of different religions and ethnicities worked together to celebrate the *seren taun* ceremony. This ceremony is held in Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal, which is the center of the Javanese-Sundanese religion (Agama Djawa Sunda). Besides, in every religious event celebration, each religious community participates actively in supporting the religious group that is in the celebration. For example, on Christmas day, the non-Christian community will celebrate together with Christians. In fact, the practice of tolerance in this region is strongly influenced by Sundanese cultural values that promote balance, equality, brotherhood, and sisterhood across borders (Rostiyati, 2019). Related to the role of local wisdom in building tolerance, Joko Tri Haryanto (Haryanto, 2014) in his research at the Tengger Community, Malang, East Java found a model of harmony based on local culture through the *sayan* tradition (attending celebrations and sharing food) and *gentenan* tradition (mutual cooperation) by Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. Another similar research from Ahsanul Khalikin

(Khalikin, 2016) in Ende shows that local wisdom in many forms, including worldviews, cultural systems, marriage traditions, social institutions, and others, can become effective media of social relations among interreligious communities.

The practice of living tolerance based on local wisdom is also demonstrated by the Maundau people. Interestingly, in this area, the stakeholders such as indigenous community institutions, religious institutions, and government are joining hands to maintain local wisdom. Here, social interaction and social integration play a significant role to preserve interreligious tolerance based on local wisdom (Prayugo, Sugiarto, 2018). Local wisdom is still promising in maintaining religious tolerance. It is proved by previous research on this issue. As happened in Mbawa Village, Donggo district, Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, where Donggo ethnic that consists of Muslim, Catholics, and Protestants applying local knowledge to avoid religious-based conflict. In other words, local wisdom in Mbawa village can maintain the relationship of interreligious groups. In every gathering and festival, interreligious groups participate actively as part of the Donggo ethnic. Although they come from different religious backgrounds, they can intermingle during the festivals and in the everyday encounter (Made, 2016).

Another research on the role of local wisdom in Buhu Village, Gorontalo showed the 'huyula' local wisdom that fosters cooperation of the people has contributed to avoiding the potential conflicts. Although life in remote areas is vulnerable to conflicts, they survive by the local wisdom. The local wisdom has encouraged people to maintain their relationship as the social capital. Besides, people in this village also live the mutual trust that reduces the risk of potential future conflicts (Hatu, Wisadhirana, Darsono, & Susilo, 2019)

The previous studies have shown the important role of local wisdom in maintaining harmony and tolerance among interreligious groups in various places in Indonesia. By reflecting on those previous researches, this study goes further to explore the role of local wisdom in strengthening

harmony and tolerance among Christians, Marapu adherents, and Muslims in Watu Asa Village, Mamboro Subdistrict, Central Sumba. The population of this village consists of the followers of Christian, Marapu, and Islam. In this village, the number of families consists of 214 families with 1002 inhabitants. Based on the number of family heads, Christians are 123 families, Marapu are 72 families and Muslim are 17 families (yearly report of Watu Asa Village in 2019). In daily practice, the three religious groups merge into a circle of kinship relationship despite their religious differences. They are intermingled through many activities in the neighborhood. Indeed, a peaceful relationship cannot occur without openness and acceptance of one another. Besides, the strong cultural values of Sumbanese as local wisdom have become the driving force for maintaining a harmonious and tolerant life in this village.

In the midst of the disruption era, local wisdom-based values of tolerance are needed as a foundation of interreligious communities. Local wisdom is social, cultural, and religious capital. Yet, the influence of religious disruption is a challenging issue for interreligious groups dealing with many disruptive religious ideologies and teachings. For this reason, in this study, there are two research questions emerged: (1) what is the impact of the disruption era on the practice of interreligious tolerance in Watu Asa Village? (2) what are the values of local wisdom in Watu Asa Village and to what extent the role of local wisdom in strengthening religious harmony and tolerance? The approach used in this research is a qualitative method to capture the whole picture of human and social problems by interpreting the meaning found in human behavior in natural social situations. Along with the qualitative method, the descriptive method seeks to describe and interpret a social situation. In this research, the descriptive method is used to describe the dynamics of harmony and tolerance in the disruption era among interreligious communities. Besides, this method will also describe the role of the local wisdom of Watu Asa people in strengthening harmony and tolerance. The sample is purposive, which is determined by the researcher based on the consideration of the

research problem, and in line with the determination of the sample in qualitative research. (Sugiyono, 2009, p. 47).

For this reason, the informants are the interreligious leaders and members, the government officials, and traditional figures as well as female figures. While the techniques of collecting data are participant observations and in-depth interviews. In this part, the researchers observe the dynamics of interreligious relations in Watu Asa Village in the disruption era, the practice of religious tolerance, and the role of local wisdom in creating harmonious and peaceful relationships among interreligious groups. Besides, the researchers also interviewed the key informants regarding their efforts to maintain tolerance and how local values contributed to the effort of maintaining religious tolerance in the disruption era.

### **Framing Local wisdom as Social Cohesion and Collective Consciousness**

Every region in Indonesia has local wisdom that directly contributes to the creation of a balanced relationship among the creator, man, and the universe. Local wisdom is lived out as a way of life by many traditional societies. In this part, there are several theories as a lens in reading the impact of local wisdom amid the dissemination of disruptive religious teaching. It can be said that local wisdom can become a shield for the interreligious community to remain in a harmonious and tolerant atmosphere. Local wisdom becomes binding for a pluralistic society to coexist safely and peacefully amidst diversity. In various peacebuilding programs, efforts have been made to revitalize local wisdom which had almost faded due to tensions and conflicts between different communities and even religions in certain regions. From the research conducted by ICIP, in various regions in Indonesia, there is local wisdom that can be used for conflict resolution. In line with this, John Haba (Haba, 2007) stated that local wisdom is closely related to local knowledge, namely "knowledge or richness of knowledge and culture in a particular society

that has been and is always being developed from time to time and continues to experience development and change. Haba discusses forms of local wisdom, namely beliefs, religious festivals, folk stories, social relations (kinship) which are believed to come from the same ancestors, dance, singing, eating together, and so on. According to him, local wisdom has two main characteristics. First, local people are familiar with the existing elements of local culture/knowledge, are understood and practiced, and maintained. Second, the collection of knowledge lives and develops in a certain social environment.

Furthermore, Haba (Haba, 2007) mentioned local wisdom has six benefits in society: (1) as a marker of community identity; (2) adhesive element (cohesive aspect) across people, religions, and beliefs; (3) local wisdom is not coercive or from the top (top-down), but as a cultural element that exists and lives in society; (4) local wisdom form the solidarity of the society; (5) local wisdom will change the mindset and reciprocal relationship between individuals and groups by placing it on the common ground of culture they have; (6) local wisdom can function to encourage togetherness and appreciation as well as social modal to counter various possibilities that reduce and even destroy communal solidarity which grows on the shared awareness of an integrated community. Here, local wisdom functions as social cohesion that binds communities from various backgrounds in one social location to celebrate life together. James E. Cote (Côté, 2005) said that identity capital and social capital are very important for social cohesion. According to Cote, in this postmodern era, there has been cultural destruction in which humans have become increasingly anomistic and individualistic. This era is also marked by the fading of social capital as the values, norms, and beliefs of community members. This situation is known as the era of social decapitalization. In this era, there was an individualization process in which local and community-based sources of life disappeared. Related to this, Cote emphasizes social capital and identity capital as the strength of a community in building social cohesion. According to him, the social model shows the existence of a person in a community or social environ-

ment where there is a strong relationship between one another. Social capital encompasses membership in one group and various statuses (age, gender, race, etc.) that serve as a passport to different social settings and institutions. These sources are following Putnam's notion of social capital, which in its pure form is a network based on unconditional trust and reciprocal relationships between members.

Nan Lin mentioned social capital as a social bonding that functions to have access to information, to have influence, to gain social credentials, and to strengthen social networks and relationships. Furthermore, Nan Lin quoted the theory of social capital put forward by Piere Bourdieu, namely that social capital in the production of all members of a community group in a particular social location. Social capital is obtained through a process of interactions for mutual respect (Lin, 2001). At the grassroots level, social capital helps a diverse community to survive despite the differences they have. Social capital is about widening social networks in society. When people have social capital, they might be easily connected even they come from different backgrounds. Social capital leads society to present well-being and peaceful life. Social capital is seen through “the participation of each individual in the local community, the proaction in a social context, feelings of trust and safety, neighborhood connections, connections with family and friends, tolerance of diversity, the value of life, and work connections” (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). According to Fields, social capital is formed by networks. When people have networks, they will be easier to be cohesive. It means networks set a space for collaboration among people from different backgrounds. In this context, social capital is inseparable from social cohesion. In social cohesion, there are social ties that interconnect different communities to achieve their goal (Field, 2008).

Social capital is an abstract concept because it refers to certain values that are lived by the community. In more specific ways, “social capital is particularly rooted on the notion of trusts, norms, and informal networks and it believes that ‘social relations are valuable resources’. Social capital encompasses “a stock of social norms, values, beliefs, trusts, obligations,



relationships, networks, friends, memberships, civic engagement, information flows, and institutions that foster cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefits and contributes to economic and social development” (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). In the context of traditional society, people actively maintain what is so-called by Emile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1984) a collective spirit and a collective consciousness to preserve their community from any danger and disaster. Durkheim highlighted that during the transition era in France and the whole of Europe caused by the France Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, people moved from the traditional era to the industrial era based on the division of labor. He stated that in traditional society, people are integrated by mechanical solidarity. In this context, collective spirit and collective consciousness take a pivotal role.

Moreover, this type of society strongly clings to the social and religious sentimental for the social and political interest. They prefer to obey the regulations from the authority figures or leaders for social cohesion, social solidarity, and social harmony in the internal circle. Furthermore, Durkheim emphasized that in the industrial society, people are interconnected by organic solidarity. In this context, people are fused in plural communities. They are not anymore live by their homogeneity, but they must intermingle in a heterogeneous context where they interact with other people from different ethnicities, cultures, religions, political views. Furthermore, social solidarity is built based on the collective consciousness, as suggested by Durkheim (Durkheim, 1995). Here, "collective spirit" has encouraged certain communities to create rites that connect the creator, man, and the universe. Collective awareness is the power that encounters individuals in a community. Collective awareness also engenders mechanical solidarity in pre-modern society and organic solidarity in modern society. However, collective awareness within the frame of organic solidarity is dynamic because it is lived out by individuals and communities who come from various backgrounds.

## **The Practice of Religious Tolerance in the Middle of the Era of Disruption in Watu Asa Village**

Watu Asa is one of the villages in the Sumba region where three religious communities: Christians, Marapu, and Muslims live together peacefully. Interestingly, those three communities are connected by kinship relationships. It happens because all Muslims and Christians in this village previously came from the Marapu family. Marapu is the indigenous belief of the Sumbanese people. In Watu Asa Village, the number of Marapu people is still in large number, compared to other areas in Sumba where most of them have become Christians. Marapu followers are around 40% of the number 1002 people of the Watu Asa population. The majority of Marapu followers live separately in Parawunga kampong as the original place of Watu Asa people. However, in their daily lives, they still have intense interactions with Christian and Muslim communities. From the observations in Watu Asa Village, Christians, Marapu adherents and Muslims coexist in a peaceful situation. In this village, there is almost no friction related to religious differences. Even though the community's education level is quite low, so far they are not easily provoked by various religious issues that have the potential to divide the existing unity.

Based on the interviews, all respondents stated that the basis of the relationship among the members of the three religious groups in Watu Asa village is the kinship relationship that is rooted in such local wisdom. Even though they have different beliefs, they are still brothers and sisters. Any differences will never eliminate the family relationship among the three religious groups. In this village, the encounter of Christian, Muslim, and Marapu occur on various occasions in the neighborhood, at the local market, and at every gathering including traditional parties and family gatherings. They also interact as usual and even fuse without borders. When they interact in a neighborhood, they never debate their religious identity or discuss religious issues. However, it does not mean that they neglect religious matters. Interestingly, when each group had religious gatherings, they will invite one another. Usually, in every event in non-Muslim families (Christian and Marapu) there will always be separate

cooking and dining places for the Muslim families. Even the animals that are eaten together especially chickens, goats, and cows will be slaughtered by a Muslim who has to recite a prayer. Usually, non-Muslim families will ask Muslim families to slaughter animals such as chickens, goats, cows which will be consumed together. This is part of respect for Muslim brothers and sisters. The separation of places to eat occurs because non-Muslims consume pork so they respect Muslim families by separating the cooking areas. Even though the menu is different, they can still eat side by side. (Interviews with Rev. Benyamin Haba (pastor of GKS Sangu Mata), Esther Tangu Sana (The Chair of Women's Commission of GKS Sangu Mata Cabang Parawunga), Ibu Carolina Poro Wokaranu (a member of Church women's commission), Watu Asa, August 5th, 2020).

Muslim families in this village are also accustomed to living with 'unclean pets' such as pigs and dogs belonging to non-Muslim neighbors. They also do not feel disturbed by these animals when roaming around the mosque and their homes. This happened because they were all Sumbanese people who before embracing Islam were accustomed to living with these "haram" animals. They are still aware of their identity as Sumba people who later adhere to Islam. In everyday life, the difference between Muslims and Christians is Muslims do not eat pork, but they are not allergic to pigs and other non-Muslim pets (interviews with Qomariah (Muslim woman), Nggiku Laya (Christian figure), Watu Asa, June 24<sup>th</sup> and July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020). From the results of the study, it was found that the people of Watu Asa Village are very optimistic with the strong kinship ties and local cultural values that become a glue amid the disruption era. The strong relationships that are based on the values of local wisdom are the strength of the interreligious community in Watu Asa Village. Even though the disruptive teachings occurred in this era of disruption, they did not affect the relationship between the three religious communities in this village area. Siwa Jaga Lamma, the head of Watu Asa Village for the 2017-2022 period said that the era of disruption did not threaten the relationship between the three religious communities in Watu Asa Village.

All members of society are intermingled in conducive social interactions both in daily life and in various formal forums. For him, the disruption era will not lead to divide interreligious people who are already bound by close kinship relations (an interview with Siwa Jagga Lama (the Village Head, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

Some respondents firmly stated that even if there is a 4G internet network in this area and it provides opportunities for various possible negative influences that could occur, it will not be able to divide the kinship relationship. For them, negative influences from outside through the internet media will not be able to make people who come from one womb hostile to each other (interviews with Siwa Jagga Lama (the Village Head), Malli Ngara (religious figure and an elder of GKS Sangu Mata), Carolina Poro Wokaranu, Ester Tanggu Sana, July 18<sup>th</sup>, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020). From the description above, it is clear that the era of disruption is unable to penetrate the strong relations among the Christian, Marapu, and Islamic religious communities in Watu Asa Village because of the kinship ties and local cultural values that are lived out in the practice of daily life.

### **Tracing the Local Wisdom Values of the Watu Asa Village Community: The Foundation to Build Interreligious Tolerance**

In the middle of the Watu Asa community, there is local wisdom that binds interreligious relations. The local wisdom of the Watu Asa people is one of the supporting factors for conducive social interactions among interreligious communities. The people of Watu Asa Village are rooted in the local wisdom and these values are practiced in their daily life. The local wisdom values are as follows:

#### ***Tana nyuwu, watu lissi***

Tana nyuwu, watu lissi which means contiguous land and adjacent stones. This philosophy emphasizes a strong unity amid existing differences. The contiguous land cannot be crushed by any storm, and the stones that are close together will stick together even if they are hit by the

harsh winds. This illustrates that the bonds of the kinship of the Sumbanese people in general, and the Mamboro people, in particular, are flown like the contiguous ground and adjacent stones. This philosophy is also a motto for the people of Watu Asa village in particular and Mamboro in general. This value is an integral part of the daily life of the Mamboro people. *Tana nyuwu watu lissi* means all people are siblings even though they come from different religions. Again, this philosophy becomes the foundation to overcome any tensions and conflicts. (interviews with Ustad Abdul Rahman, Rev. Benyamin Haba, Nggiku Laya, Mukka Tara Awang, Mali Ngara, Ester Tanggu Sana, Carolina Poro Wokaranu, Watu Asa, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

### *Palomai/palonggamai*

*Palomai/palonggamai* is a tradition of cooperation in everyday life. This culture shows a shared-life of one another as a community, an attitude of helping each other in joy and sorrow. In daily life, interreligious people practice *palomai/palonggamai* through sharing and exchanging foods and other basic needs such as clean water, sugar, coffee.

*Palomai/palonggamai* also means visiting one another's house without being restricted by religious barriers. For instance, Muslim neighbors and relatives can freely eat and drink in their non-Muslim family houses. Except when there is a party, then there will be a separation of eating and cooking places as a form of respect. In everyday life, the difference between Muslims and Christians is Muslims do not eat pork, but they are not allergic to live with pigs, dogs belong to the non-Muslim family in their neighborhood (interview with some Muslim figures: Yusrain, Abdul Rahman, Salepi Mila Oli or Abdul Rahim, Watu Asa, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

Some Muslims also experience living the *palomai/palonggamai* tradition with their fellow Marapu members and Christians. When they are in trouble, Christian families often help them with rice, clean water, coffee, and sugar, and vice versa. Qomariah, a Muslim woman (an

interview, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020) who also lives among Christian families which is her husband's sibling, said that their daily relationship is very close because there are almost no boundaries. They mingled as usual and even exchanged food. She also added that they have never debated their religious differences. Problems that occur are usually only due to personal matters that have no relation to religious matters. Besides, Muhammad Yusnain, the influential Muslim figure, (an interview, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020) also said the same thing, where *the palomai* culture is a unifier for them even though they have different beliefs in their extended family. However, the *palomai* culture is still practiced, especially when there are events through mutual support and mutual help to ease the burden on the family who holds the event, whether it is a marriage event or a death event. In line with this, Haryati Mbepa, an Islamic religious counselor, (an interview, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020), also said that the *palomai* culture is one of the cultural practices that unite the community members in Watu Asa Village even though they have different beliefs.

From all respondents' statements, it can be concluded that the *palomai/palonggamai* tradition is the glue of the community in Watu Asa village through the act of supporting one another from small things such as providing basic needs to larger and more complex donation such as for marriage events, death events, and any other gatherings.

*Mandara* is a barter system or exchanging goods/foodstuffs during the harvest season where the majority of Muslim families who work as fishermen will come to non-Muslim families who mostly work as farmers. The Muslim family usually comes with fish, salt, and other seafood in exchange for other kinds of needs such as rice, corn, cassava, and vegetables. Until now, the *Mandara* tradition is still preserved in Watu Asa Village and this tradition has become the adhesive of kinship and friendship ties among interreligious communities (an interview with Ustad Abdul Rahman, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

In connection with this *Mandara* tradition, Rev. Benyamin Haba (an interview, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020) said that as a Christian leader, he also received

gifts from Muslim friends. He often gets fish and other seafood from Muslim families who work as fishermen. Then he repaid their kindness by giving them rice and corn.

Through this activity, the intimate relationship becomes stronger. People involved in these activities do not always have relatives relations. *Mandara* tradition brings people from different backgrounds into a circle of solidarity. *Mandara* activities are different from economic transactions. This activity emphasizes more friendship relationships. In this tradition, there is no agreement on price standards but more on helping each other.

#### *Kalli kawana, kalli kawinni*

*Kalli kawana, kalli kawinni* is the tradition of inviting men and women to traditional gatherings/parties. In this invitation, men and women (husband and wife) are involved to take different roles. When attending an invitation, men and women will come to support the family who holds the gatherings. For instance, women will come by bringing rice, sugar, firewoods, while men will come to prepare equipment for the gathering. (interviews with Ustad Abdul Rahman, Ester Tanggu Sana, Haryani Mbepa, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020).

#### *Pandula wikki*

*Pandula wikki* is helping each other based on the principle that helping others is helping oneself. When every member of society lives this value, then they will free and open to help others who are in trouble regardless of their backgrounds. This value is a driving force that supports the lives of the people of Watu Asa Village. Amid economic difficulties, the value of *Pandula wikki* helps the people of Watu Asa Village who come from different religions to survive and even be able to go through the crisis because of material and moral support from one another. *Pandula wikki* is an activity of helping each other to do something such as building a house and doing other works together. In this tradition, unity and togetherness are highly valued. When everyone helps others in various activities, this is understood as helping oneself as well. This means that at

one time, he will receive any help from others (an interview with Siwa Jaga Lamma, the head of Watu Asa village, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

### *Paoli*

*Paoli* in simple translation means having friends. This term refers to the willingness to open up and embrace others in the circle of friendship. *Paoli* itself is an activity of sitting together for discussing any topics in every traditional meeting that involving all families regardless of religious backgrounds. In many activities, the value of *paoli* plays a role in asking support from all the families including sharing opinions to have common decisions for the decision making. Through the value of *paoli*, each person demonstrates a need for the other's presence. (an interview with Siwa Jaga Lamma, July, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

In connection with this cultural practice, Semi Jingga Lipi or Abdul Azis said that strong kinship relation or what is called *paolidadi* is the basis for the implementation of *paoli*. In *paoli* practice, the spirit of cooperation and respect (*patambi*) for one another is very important. Thus, *paoli* become a forum that gathers people to discuss everything and to encourage them to fulfill their hope for building a better and more harmonious society (an interview with Semi Jingga Lipi or Abdul Azis, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020). The wisdom values described above are the foundation of interreligious people in Watu Asa Village to strengthens their kinship ties. In this context, even though they embrace different religions, the values of local culture never fade in their memories. This is clearly recorded in their memory and these values are lived out in the practice of daily life, especially in their daily interactions.

### **Highlighting the Impact of Local Wisdom in Strengthening Interreligious Tolerance in Watu Asa Village**

The challenges of the disruptive religious teachings that spread everywhere, tolerance based on local wisdom are needed as a binder between interreligious communities. It must be admitted that the 4.0 industrial revolution could have an impact on religious tolerance in NTT,



such as the decrease of local cultural values caused by disruptive information through digital media. For this reason, this study seeks to introduce the strengthening of harmony and tolerance based on local wisdom as a foundation for countering the religious disruption. In this context, local wisdom can be a counter-narrative for the spread of intolerant values through many digital media. If the values of local wisdom that support tolerance continue to be echoed, the disruptive religious teachings will not be able to destroy the relationship among interreligious groups. The local wisdom is a social and cultural capital that mobilizes the collective awareness of interreligious communities to coexist safely and peacefully.

Amid the spread of hoaxes and issues that have the potentials to divide religious communities in many places in Indonesia, local wisdom values have integrated interreligious people in Watu Asa Village who are heterogeneous in terms of religion, yet culturally homogeneous. This means that the interreligious people of Watu Asa Village are strongly rooted in their local culture. Previously, Muslims and Christians were from the same root, that is Marapu. It is the reason why Christians, Marapu followers, and Christians always encounter in many traditional events. Therefore, the local wisdom that is rooted in Marapu teaching becomes the identity of both the personal dan social identity of interreligious people in this village. In other words, the local wisdom is a shared identity of interreligious groups. Local wisdom is a social cohesion that binds communities from various backgrounds in one social location to celebrate life together. From the research results, it was found that the three interreligious communities in Watu Asa Village are engaged with one another because of their close kinship based on local wisdom values. Durkheim (1984, pp. 60-63) said that in traditional societies, humans are integrated by mechanical solidarity. In this context, humans maintain a collective spirit and collective consciousness to protect community life from various disasters and calamities. They obey rules ordered by the authorities to maintain social cohesion, social solidarity, and social harmony in their internal context.

In a traditional society, people naturally have social cohesion by certain values, traditions that belong to them. While in a more complex society, social cohesion is taking an important role. When people from different backgrounds live in a neighborhood, they should be socially cohesive to have a peaceful relationship. In such context, “there may be ethnic or religion-based communities living side by side.” It means, maintaining social cohesion in the context of plural society is taking big efforts due to the possibility of conflicts among different groups. In other words, social cohesion cannot ensure the endurance of harmony in diversity (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). For this reason, each community in a plural society should stick to such common values that make them interrelate cohesively. In Watu Asa Village, the practices of local wisdom through such traditions are part of maintaining mechanical solidarity in kinship relations. In the context of Watu Asa, the religious difference is not an obstacle for interreligious people to have engagement in daily activities. Even though Muslim women wear the hijab (veil) as a religious attribute in their daily activities, they are not seen and considered differently by non-Muslim communities. Here, it is clear that the people of Watu Asa Village are a traditional society that is bound by local cultural values. Even though they have different religions but they are still one because of strong blood ties.

As mentioned above, local wisdom is the social capital that binds interreligious people in Watu Asa Village. For instance, the philosophy of *tana nyuwu watu lissi* reflects the unity in diversity. This philosophy has raised the collective consciousness of interreligious people in Watu Asa to maintain harmony and tolerance. This value becomes the driving force for the conducive interaction among interreligious people in this village. As known, social capital exists in the relations among people. Social capital demands trust, trustworthiness, and other social norms. It means people are interconnected easily in society because they have common values and norms. The lack of social capital in a society leads to the disintegration of social life (Coleman, 1988). Local wisdom values such as *palomai /*

*palonggamai, Pandula wikki, paoli, kalli kawana kalli kawini* are part of social capital where people interact and offer help to one another. Actually, this social capital is built in mechanical solidarity based on collective awareness to maintain kinship through cooperation in solving all life problems. As relatives, interreligious people always meet at every traditional party or gathering. When there is a traditional party such as a wedding party, death event, and a ceremony to build a house, other families will attend by bringing stuff such as rice, coffee, sugar, firewoods, and other necessities. Usually, women will come with '*ana kapepi*' or a small basket containing basic needs. The women came first to help the families who held parties as well as take part in working in the kitchen. While men will do other work such as building tents, cleaning the venue for the party or traditional event.

Local wisdom is observable through the interaction of the people in a certain context. Local wisdom encourages people from different religious communities to communicate with full of respect. In Watu Asa, there is no tension related to religious differences because people are coming from one single ethnic background. Religious issues are not a big matter for people in Watu Asa because they are tied by kinship relationships. It might be difficult for people who are living in ethno-religious diversity. In this context, it is important to practice intercultural communication through many encounters in everyday life. It can be seen through the interaction of different religious and ethnic communities in Buneng. In this place, the majority (Javanese-Moslem) and the ethno-religious minorities (Batak, Floresian, Helong, Christians, and Buddhists) coexist peacefully because they respect the differences through verbal and non-verbal communication (Eko & Putranto, 2019).

In Watu Asa Village, people are rooted in local wisdom as their social capital. Interestingly, Christians, Marapu, and Muslims in this village actively supporting one another in daily life and in many traditional gatherings. It can be said that local wisdom in Watu Asa has become the basis of social interaction. Therefore, they have strong engagement

because they are tied by such cultural values as the local wisdom. As noted by Putnam, "social capital is built through the connections among individuals, the networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness" (Marschall, 2016; Putnam, 2020). Local wisdom practices in Watu Asa village are a source of social capital that contributes to the maintenance of harmony and tolerance. The local wisdom ensures the sustainable engagement of interreligious communities.

Generally speaking, the people of Watu Asa Village have not yet entered the space of organic solidarity because the existing relationships are only based on family relationships based on local wisdom values. So far, they can coexist peacefully despite their different religions because they are bound by blood relations. Until now, the values of local wisdom in Watu Asa Village are still being preserved because the people in this village have not lived side by side with immigrant groups of different ethnicities and religions. However, even though these values grow in a society that is kinship-connected, the spirit of these local wisdom values is universal and transcends boundaries. This means that these values become a driving force for the people of Watu Asa Village to cross ethnic, geographic, and religious boundaries. Through the spirit of acceptance, openness, cooperation through the traditions of *tana nyuwu watu lissi*, *palomai/palonggamai*, *paoli*, *Pandula wikki*, *kalli kawana*, *kalli kawini*, *mandara*, the people of Watu Asa Village can cross the boundaries of kinship to meet the diverse ethno-religious.

In the context of a culturally homogeneous society, the people of Watu Asa Village still exist in mechanical solidarity. However, local wisdom values such as *tana nyuwu watu lissi* and other values, emphasizes the interconnectedness of one another.. These values are not only limited to practice in an internal circle but they embrace people from different backgrounds including ethnicities as part of *tana nyuwu watu lissi* or as a big family in humanity. Likewise, the values of *palomai / palonggamai* and *Pandula wikki* refer to the attitude of helping one another which does not only occur among siblings but crosses ethnic and religious boundaries.

This means that the local wisdom values mentioned above are universal, but are only expressed in local languages.

## **Conclusion**

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the disruption era has not brought a negative impact on the relationship of the interreligious community in Watu Asa Village. Even though the mobile phone signal and 4G internet network just only existed in this village in April 2020, this situation is considered not a threat to religious tolerance which is built on family relations and local cultural values. In this context, religious disruption which causes intolerant practices will not penetrate the defense of local wisdom values that are shared and nurtured by the Christian, Marapu, and Muslim communities in Watu Asa Village. In principle, the local wisdom that is lived by interreligious groups in Watu Asa village has represented inclusive religious values that highlight the value of love, respect, hospitality, welcoming each other, acceptance. The local values are a shared-identity of Christians, Marapu followers, and Muslims in Watu Asa. Here, local wisdom values can collaborate with religious values in building tolerance.

From the experience of interreligious people in Watu Asa Village, the values of local wisdom have a strategic role in maintaining harmony and tolerance. These values are the foundation to face religious disruption. The local wisdom-based approach is very promising in strengthening harmony and tolerance in the context of interreligious communities at the grassroots level. Indeed, local wisdom-based tolerance is a social, cultural, and religious capital for interreligious communities in Watu Asa village. The local wisdom values are cross-border values, which can be practiced by anyone, including those who are not part of the family/community. Even though these values are a consensus within the scope of traditional society, these values can become the basis for encounters and interactions with other groups that do not come from this village. These local wisdom values are not only applied among the villagers who are kinship, but also

encouraging the village community to embrace people from various backgrounds. In other words, the existing local wisdom values are not only limited in their scope but have a universal spirit that can be practiced by anyone from various religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.[w]

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