

UNITING THE DIFFERENT: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN STRENGTHENING INTERFAITH RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN NGARGOMULYO

Irzum Fariyah ^{a*)}, Ismanto ^{a)}

^{a.)} Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Kudus, Indonesia

^{*)} Corresponding Author: irzum@iainkudus.ac.id,

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Abstract. This research aims to see how the participation of community leaders in Ngargomulyo to strengthen religious moderation in a pluralistic society. This type of research is field research, with data collection techniques through observation and researchers as participant observers, in-depth interviews with non-structured models, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data analysis uses the Miles Huberman-Saldana model, which begins with data collection which is then sorted first, after which the data is presented, and ends with data verification. The results of this study show that: First, that in uniting communities that are different from faith requires the role of community leaders. This role is carried out in assisting the community, starting from discussion activities between interfaith youth facilitated by the village government. Second, the delivery of religious material, although the target is for residents of the same faith, but still maintain ethics with other religions by not demonising groups that are not of the same faith as themselves. Third, the implementation of community culture that has been passed down from generation to generation becomes a space for encounter between them, so that mechanical solidarity is very visible in these cultural activities.

Keywords: interfaith, religious moderation, community leaders, religious leaders

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian people who are plural with a variety of religions and cultures should already understand and be accustomed to the conditions of differences in beliefs, but on the contrary, with the diversity of religions and cultures, many people have not realised this (Chasram, 2016). Every religion has norms and traditions that guide its people in carrying out worship and has a belief in the existence of God Almighty and each has a different way of worship (Wekke, 2017).

Universal problems that cannot be avoided by every religious believer are issues related to the process of understanding religious teachings. Until whenever the problem will continue, because there is a fundamental difference between the nature of religion and human reality. Religion is absolute because it comes from the absolute reality of God (Fariyah, 2014a).

The social history of religious communities in various parts of the world has never been free from conflicts, both those originating from religious differences and those caused by non-religious factors, such as ethnicity, politics, economics, culture and so on as revealed above. However, if we look at the occurrence of social unrest in Indonesia so far, it is very visible on religious factors as a trigger, although the conflict is not directly in the name of religion (J. T. Haryanto, 2013).

Ibn al-Azraq's view that humans by nature are oppressive and oppressive, his opinion is considered a truth, when there is a conflict, then each one who feels strong or weak tends to pursue the path of injustice, unless there is a third party who controls (Khadduri, 1999).

However, it cannot be avoided, that in social life cannot be separated from differences in views, especially related to beliefs. For example, the outbreak of conflict in various communities, ranging from large-scale conflicts to conflicts between citizens at the smallest level (S. Haryanto, 2015). The dynamics of conflicts that develop, not only involve one ethnicity with another ethnicity, one religion with another religion, but involve a community that has the same ethnic and religious background. In addition, conflicts also occur within certain political groups or social groups, despite being under the same ideological umbrella. The occurrence of conflict is motivated by various factors, including religion, ethnicity, tribe, social, economic, political (struggle for influence and power), justice, and the involvement of political elites in conflicts in various regions (Jurdi, 2014), from rural to urban areas. Conflict itself does not affect the level of education of a person, from those who have never known school to those who are highly educated.

Every absolutising claim built by each religious group can plunge inter-religious relations into a feud that has no end.

This feud is even more crucial if the material basis between one religious group and another is quite sharp. Therefore, it is necessary to build dialogue. There are two things that can be gained from dialogue, namely: the erosion of misunderstandings that stem from the different languages of each religion. Dialogue is intended to find a common response to all challenges faced by religions (Syukur, 2015). When the dialogue can be built properly, it will achieve a tolerant attitude between religions and within religions (Hadisaputra & Syah, 2020).

Building tolerant and moderate attitudes is not enough with dialogue, but it needs to be embedded in the habituation that has been done by the local community, as research by Setinawati and Tanyid that villagers internalise moderate attitudes and tolerance in existing cultural practices, so that they can also be practiced in everyday life (Setinawati et al., 2025). Likewise Zulkifli, that the socio-cultural context that can influence moderate attitudes when compared to only inter-religious interactions that have been applied (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Harmony is the condition and process of creating and maintaining diverse patterns of interaction among autonomous units (elements or sub-systems). Harmony reflects a reciprocal relationship characterised by mutual acceptance, mutual trust, mutual respect and appreciation, and mutual understanding of togetherness (Jamaluddin, 2015).

Thus, interfaith harmony means living in an atmosphere of peace, avoiding conflict, even though they are of different religions, or being in a state of harmony, calm and peaceful, without strife and conflict, united in the intention to help each other (Khafidhotunnur & Fariyah, 2019). This does not mean relativising existing religions and merging them into one totality (religious syncretism) by making existing religions a school of religion of that totality, but rather as a way or means to bring together, regulate external relations between people who are not of the same religion or between groups of religious believers in social community life. Therefore, harmony in Islam is given the term 'tasamuh' or tolerance. Tolerance is social harmony, not in the field of Islamic creed (faith) because creed has been outlined clearly and firmly in the Koran and Hadith.

Religious harmony is also defined as a state of fellow religious people based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, respect for equality in the practice of their religious teachings and cooperation in the life of society, nation and state. The attitude of harmony and peace is evidenced by the absence of social conflict or opposition that can divide the unity (integrity) of society in the nation and state, as well as good and neat cooperation in achieving a common goal, which is known as social interaction (Johnson, 1994).

In this context, the role of community leaders is very important to build and maintain harmony between various elements in society. Community leaders, who can come from various backgrounds such as religion, culture, education, or politics, have a great influence in providing direction and good examples to the wider community. They not only act as leaders, but also as bridges to create mutual understanding,

build dialogue, and reduce tensions that may arise due to differences. Through their inclusive, wise and tolerant attitudes, community leaders can encourage the formation of a harmonious and tolerant society that is able to co-exist despite significant differences. As agents of change, they can contribute to creating an environment that supports peace, respects diversity, and strengthens national unity.

As is the case in Ngargomulya Village, Magelang Regency, located on the slopes of Merapi, the community here is a pluralistic society consisting of Muslims, Catholics, Christians, and faiths. They have been known as a 'peaceful' area even though the beliefs between neighbours are different. They have been able to get used to living side by side without questioning each other's beliefs, because it is a privacy and does not need to be asked, but one with the other needs to understand. From this condition, there are certainly external factors that can support the peaceful attitude that has been well maintained. This is inseparable from the role of community leaders in uniting people who have different beliefs. Therefore, this paper is important to know the roles of community leaders to keep conditioning their citizens to maintain human relations, either through meetings scheduled from the village government, or some efforts made by kiai or priests whose every message is more heard by their congregation.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research approach uses ethnography (Spradley, 1997), which is the observation of the religious behaviour of the Merapi Slope community, supported by in-depth semi-structured discussions and interviews with all elements of society. Researchers mingle with (live in) the community of Merapi Slopes as participants of this research, namely by getting to know more closely the religious life of the community, both internal religious communities and inter-religious communities. The sociological dimension as a research perspective is to explore the religious behaviour of various groups with their culture and interpret the socio-cultural values of the Merapi Slope community. This ethnographic observation was documented in the form of field notes and voice recordings that researchers took and reflected in detail while in the field from various kinds of religious activities and daily life of the Merapi Slope community.

This research was conducted in Ngargomulyo village, Dukun sub-district, Magelang district. This village is a representation of the Merapi Slope community due to the existence of religious and belief social organisations, ranging from NU and Muhammadiyah, Catholic, and kejawen community groups.

Participatory observations on religious life and religious activities carried out by various communities on the slopes of Merapi were also conducted by researchers, through congregational prayers, community service activities. The participants involved in the research are those who directly or indirectly have the potential to manage inter-religious harmony, namely:

1. The village head, as the person in charge of fostering inter-religious harmony
2. Religious figures or leaders, as representatives of each religious group, both across beliefs and with a background in community organisations.
3. Farmer group, as an element of society with the background of the majority of its work
4. Community members, as the real actors of religious life in the community.

Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and audio and visual documentation. First, the researcher's participatory observation in religious activities carried out by the Merapi Slope community, where the researcher takes part with the community in religious activities, such as recitation. Passive observation was also conducted to see the demographic conditions and social religious activities of the Merapi Slope community.

Second, in-depth interviews with community leaders and socio-religious organisations and the people of Merapi Slopes. Researchers conducted various negotiations to obtain primary data from each participant, both community leaders, figures from religious social organisations and the people of the Merapi Slopes. The initial negotiation started with one of the participants that the researcher knew well - the participant had been an Islamic religious instructor - understanding the map of religious social organisations on the slopes of Merapi. This was sustained by first contacting the leaders, administrators, and members of each socio-religious organisation. Due to the closeness of family, friends, and neighbours, the researcher found it easy to meet the informants directly. Nevertheless, ethics in ethnographic research are also applied, namely by: considering the position of participants, by safeguarding rights, interests, and sensitivities, conveying the purpose of the research, protecting privacy, not exploiting, and providing reports to participants.

Approaching informants also requires the right opportunity and of course considering the location of the interview, because the theme of this research for some informants is something private and 'disgraceful' for them, so researchers need to be present and blend in with the community. In maintaining the privacy of the participants, the researcher asked permission to take pictures with the participants or their activities, besides that the real names were not displayed, only codes that were not easily understood by other readers were displayed in this dissertation with the aim of maintaining their privacy. Many of the participants cancelled their scheduled meetings with the researcher due to concerns about being known to other people or their groups. For the researcher, this is their right and of course the researcher must understand and still respect their information.

Interviews with representatives of the community on the slopes of Merapi, such as the village government, and youth groups, Islamic, Catholic and faith organisations in portraying the attitude of tolerance of the community on the slopes of Merapi. Interviews with these participants using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques, where

participants who know and are directly involved in religious tolerance, both from the youth and adults of the Merapi Slopes community. This interview is also to explore more deeply about the behaviour of religious tolerance when struggling with family, colleagues at work, and social interactions with neighbours.

Third, data collection was also conducted through focus group discussions (FGDs), involving the research team as facilitators, village officials, religious leaders, youth, and teachers. This FGD was conducted to formulate a harmonious religious life, by appreciating the existence of various religions and beliefs, cultures, educational backgrounds, occupations to build and/or maintain a harmonious and peaceful life in the frame of religious moderation.

Fourth, secondary data was obtained from village officials about the demographic data of the Merapi Slope community in Ngargomulyo Village. Literature is also used as comparative data from field data, of course, literature related to religious tolerance and social religious behaviour of the Merapi Slope community. Documentation is also in the form of writing, namely, photos that have been documented by the Ngargomulyo Village government of religious and social life behaviour between its citizens.

Data analysis used in this research begins with transcribing primary and secondary data through interviews, observation, and documentation. After collecting the data, the Miles-Huberman-Saldana Interactive Model (2014) about the religious tolerance of the people in the Merapi Slope community, and several approaches used by policy-making elements both social life by the Ngargomulyo Village Government, as well as religious social organisations in the village, such as youth, youth group, Aisyiah Magelang Regional Leadership, in the context of assisting elderly converts. The data will be presented (display). The final stage of analysis is verification from various sources and data collection techniques, so as to obtain a formulation of inter-religious harmony of the Merapi Slope community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ngargomulyo Socio-religious Activities

Ngargomulyo is one of the villages in Dukun Sub-district, Magelang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This sub-district is approximately 21 km from Mungkid City, the capital of Magelang Regency to the east. The administrative centre is in Banyudono Village, and the sub-district is located on the western slope of Mount Merapi (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dukun,_Magelang, accessed 26 July 2022).

Ngargomulyo Village is the last village on the slopes of Merapi in the Muntilan Region of Magelang. The population of Ngargomulyo Village is 2,541 people and the condition of the community is different both in terms of profession and religious life. 48.37% (1,229 people) are male and 51.63% (1,312 people) are female. There are 88 households, of which 82.1% are male and 17.9% are female.

The Ngargomulyo community coexists with a variety of beliefs, although the majority are Muslim and then Catholic

and Christian. Although there is also a sect of belief, it is very minimal. They have been taking care of each other, especially when performing religious rituals. In addition, social religious activities can also run well, with each religion having activities that are still routinely carried out. Among them, in the Catholic religion, the Catholic religious culture is held in different time frames, such as the worship group and piapir which is carried out once a week. In addition, some other activities that are carried out on a monthly basis are the Catholic Women's group (WK), the Catholic youth group, the Catholic young family forum, and the Catholic young people. In addition to social and religious cultural activities, Ngargomulyo Village also has a variety of interfaith social and religious cultural activities with different time frames. These activities are sedekahan, which is held once a month, community service or gotong royong, which is held three times a month, and neighbourhood association groups, which are held every other month. There are also some activities that are carried out once a year, namely art groups, perti dusun, commemoration of national holidays, ruwahan, and sinoman groups. The diversity of religions and beliefs, as well as the occupations and cultural activities of Ngargomulyo village that have survived until now, is an expression of all the villagers and the local village government.

The role of community leaders

The people of Ngargomulyo are known to be devout to their respective religions. Religious activities that are routinely carried out by each believer are also carried out solemnly. This is also well supported by the village government. Among the religious activities carried out are:

1. Youth and Village Government

Inter-religious communication forums are also facilitated by the village government. Interfaith meetings in Ngargomulyo Village are always scheduled by the village, although they are not held regularly. The meeting spaces initiated by the village invite representatives from various religious leaders, youth, and community elements.

The purpose of the event is to hear the various problems that occur in the community related to the joint life between religious communities, whether this joint life is still well established or there are frictions between neighbours caused by differences in beliefs. Thus, if there is an initial friction in the community and the village knows, it will be easier to resolve it.

This meeting was also used as a medium to discuss the annual traditional activities that are always held in the village. Where these activities will be 'songgo' together and some activities that can be carried out together, which will be appointed from each religious group to represent as the coordinator of each activity. In addition, the village apparatus also consists of various religions in Ngargomulyo Village, of course the majority of which are Islam and Catholicism.

In addition, a 'srawung youth interfaith' agenda is currently being initiated and will be implemented starting at the end of this year, which will collaborate with four

neighbouring sub-districts. The youth informant said that the srawung event was held with the aim of discussing how to live religiously starting from young people, not discussing the substance of the religion, because by strengthening the building of harmony among young people, it is hoped that it will help maintain and reduce the occurrence of conflicts stemming from differences in beliefs in society.

Youth informants said that this srawung event was held with the aim of discussing how to live religiously starting from young people, not discussing the substance of their religion, because by providing strengthening of harmony building among young people, it is hoped that it will help maintain and suppress conflicts stemming from differences in beliefs in society.

2. Religious Leaders

The people of Ngargomulyo are known to be devout to their respective religions. Religious activities that are routinely carried out by each believer are also carried out solemnly. This is also well supported by the village government. Among the religious activities carried out are:

Firstly, the routine recitation that is held in Ngargomulyo Village. The recitation that has been formed by the Muslim community is called Majelis Ta'lim al-Ihsan, which is followed by the Muslim community of Ngargomulyo Village from several hamlets. This recitation was initiated by Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama (NU) leaders in Ngargomulyo Village. For example, the al-Ihsan recitation is chaired by the village secretary (carik) Mr Widodo and assisted by other village officials.

When this recitation is held in one of the hamlets where the population between Muslims and Catholics is almost the same, for example Bojong Hamlet, from the preparation to the implementation of the recitation, Catholics not only accept but also help each other to succeed the recitation event. In addition, Muslims are also able to maintain various things related to their respective beliefs, so that no conflict occurs.

Vice versa, if Catholics hold religious activities, Muslims also help to prepare the needs of these religious activities. In the religious rituals of Christians and Catholics, they usually prepare special dishes for them, including foods that are forbidden in Islamic teachings. They also invite their Muslim neighbours after the religious rituals, which are then followed by a social gathering. It is at this moment that they eat together. Because some of the food served cannot be consumed by Muslims, they always prepare a separate menu for Muslims, one of which is processed chicken.

One of the hamlets in Ngargomulyo Village, Ngadong, is predominantly Catholic, but its northern neighbour, Karanganyar, is predominantly Muslim. Every Catholic holiday, they have to go to church where the celebrations often last until night, so to make the Catholics worship solemnly, the Muslims who live in Karanganyar and the minority who live in Ngadong collaborate to maintain the

security of the hamlet while the Catholics perform rituals in the church (FGD informant).

Vice versa with the construction of a musala or house of worship for Muslims in Ngadong Hamlet, Muslim residents previously asked permission from the majority Catholic community first, before the construction of houses of worship, processed the permit to the government. The Muslims in Ngadong are 5 families (head of family) totaling 15 people. Before the house of worship was built, they prayed in one of the residents' houses. After the permission from the Catholics came out, they (Muslims) started the licensing process to the government and prepared the equipment for the establishment of the house of worship. During the construction process of the Muslim mosque in Ngadong Hamlet, Catholics also participated in the construction, even not only Catholics in Ngadong, the neighboring hamlet also participated in the establishment of a house of worship for Muslims in Ngadong Hamlet. As stated by one of the informants from a Catholic figure (B): "It is not the differences that are seen, but the spirit of mutual cooperation that must be kept alive," and there is a Javanese statement that is held, namely 'wong Jowo ora iso ngilangi Jawane' (FGD Informant).

Second, the delivery of religious material. The distance between people's homes and places of worship is very close, so what is conveyed by religious leaders in each place of worship is very likely to be heard by other religions whose homes are close together. One of them is during the implementation of the Friday sermon, Catholics also listen to the Friday Khutbah from the mosque clearly because they also use loudspeakers that come out. Therefore, religious leaders have a role in maintaining inter-religious harmony by using religious narratives that do not offend Catholics. Islamic leaders, in addition to delivering materials related to daily worship as a strengthening of the implementation of religious teachings for Muslims, kiai also deliver sermon materials related to religious teachings related to how to build inter-religious harmony that is being lived by the Ngargomulyo community by carrying out the principles of tawassuth, tasamuh, and tawazun. So that in the delivery of sermon material, they do not convey sentences that demonize other religions and justify their own religion. In addition, the kiai also avoid sentences that invite by force to other religions to convert to Islam. As conveyed by Kiai Nasta'in, that living in a pluralistic society needs to be able to *tepo sliro* by recognizing differences, looking for similarities, and building tolerance.

Religious substance conveyed by religious leaders in Ngargomulyo in religious rituals using loudspeakers where this can be heard by all residents and coincidentally among them are different religions. Therefore, the leaders use narratives to convey religious texts must remain careful so as not to offend other religions. As stated by informant WC:

"During the Friday prayer sermon, Catholics also listen, because the Catholic residence is very close to

the mosque and so far the sermon material delivered has never been about demonizing other religions".

One of the efforts that has been made by religious leaders to maintain the harmony that has been built in Ngargomulyo Village through the narratives conveyed to Muslims through the Friday sermon is responded well by the residents and the village government itself, because thus, harmony and peace in social life will be well maintained.

Strengthening Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is actually a balanced attitude between one's own religious experience and respect for the religious practices of others. Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance and harmony, both at the local, national and global levels (Tamarin & Farihah, 2024). The choice of religious moderation is a rejection of extremism and liberalism in religion, so what is prioritized is balance for the creation of peace in human life (Farihah, 2023). In this way, humanity will treat others with respect, accept differences, and live together in harmony (Akhmadi, 2019).

The basis of religious moderation is fairness and balance in viewing, responding to, and practicing all concepts that have been paired. The balance referred to here is describing the perspective, attitude, and commitment to always side with justice, humanity, and equality (Agama, 2013).

The effort of the principle of moderation is to teach every religious adherent to do passing-over (crossing boundaries) with one another so that any interreligious differences can be eliminated as much as possible, so that coexistence is established in the frame of mutual respect and understanding. When viewed from the goal that moderation has an orientation to create peace, and efforts to dismiss aspects that are prone to conflict (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

The framework for understanding religious moderation seen in religious and social relations can start from an attitude of tolerance which will foster an attitude of respect for differences, thus an egalitarian attitude emerges. Meanwhile, at the religious level, it begins with contextual interpretation of texts, so that blind taklid will not occur, and of course it will be able to avoid truth claims (Rahman & Noor, 2020).

Indonesia is a country that has a lot of cultural, religious, racial and ethnic diversity so tolerance is needed in the indicators of religious moderation. Tolerance is not only about religious beliefs but also culture, ethnicity, differences in sexual orientation, gender, and race (Akhmadi, 2019). Tolerance also refers to a gentle attitude in accepting differences, willingly, gracefully, and openly. This is because tolerance itself means giving space in expressing opinions, expressing their beliefs, and not interfering with other people's right to belief even though it is different from what is believed (Farihah, 2018). In addition, positive thinking and being respectful in accepting those who are different must participate in

implementing the tolerant attitude itself (Riniti Rahayu & Surya Wedra Lesmana, 2020).

In reality, building a common vision in a pluralistic society is not easy, especially when religion is the strongest element in society. Indonesia is a nation populated by various primordial ties as a consequence of its vast territory and consists of various large and small islands, with their unique languages and cultures (Shonhaji, 2012).

Under these objective conditions, all elements should be actively involved in realizing the vision. The problem that often arises in the formation of a vision for a pluralistic nation is the issue of representation. Usually, the majority forces fight for greater value in the national vision, while minority groups fight for elements of togetherness without having to emphasize the representation factor (Burhani, 2019).

To realize a harmonious society in Indonesia, according to Kahmad (2002, p. 174), a wise step for every believer is to learn from historical reality, namely history that encourages the realization of a plural and integrative society. Therefore, the agenda that needs to be formulated by the people of Ngargomulyo Village is to turn the differences that occur in society into a unity, that they are human beings who must be able to respect one another. Religion is not only seen as an instrument of political mobilization, but what is more important is to treat it as a source of ethics in interactions, both among fellow rulers and between rulers and the people (Mahadi, 2013). If ethics in religious moderation can be upheld, then there is no need for a series of riots, disputes, and destruction of places of worship. By understanding the concept of harmony in the Qur'an, it will create a society that is harmonious and sincere in the application of tolerance between and within religions, so that an equilibrium society will be realized.

In Islam itself is known as a pluralist civil society, not only limited to recognizing and accepting the reality of community plurality, but diversity must be understood as a true bond and affinity as symbolized in *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (divorced but still one). Diversity in religion must also be accompanied by an attitude that sincerely accepts the reality of pluralism as a positive wisdom. Here the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad has a very important meaning, namely "the differences that arise among my people are a blessing" (Syamsuddin, 2000).

Religious attitudes and behaviors that are accommodating to local culture actually have the aim of seeing how far a religious believer is able to accept local traditions and cultures that are accommodated by his religious practices. As long as local cultures and traditions do not conflict with the main teachings of their religion, a moderate person should be able to show a friendly attitude in accepting them (Junaedi, 2019).

Weber in his thinking sees how religion regulates and shapes behavior as an aspect of rationalization (Weber, 1965). Religion itself is an order of social spirit that is manifested in the form of belief and recognition of

existence outside of humans. This kind of religious condition gives birth to a stimulating effect that is very sensitive to the recognition of faith. Religion is considered an absolute. All religious people believe wholeheartedly that believing in religion will certainly provide salvation. In looking at the social functions of religious behavior, where society has certain needs for its survival and maintenance, religion functions to fulfill some of these human needs (Pals, 1996).

As for community leaders, Weber's concept consists of three categorizations of authority, namely: charismatic, traditional, and formal legal authority (Jones et al., 2016). As for what happened in Ngargomulyo Village, the strengthening of religious moderation in a pluralistic society, of course, all three can work together. The village head, who is central in all activities carried out, becomes the benchmark for the running of religious and social activities in the community not only from formal legal authority, but also a respected figure from each religion. This can be seen from what has been implemented by one of the village heads. This can be seen from what has been carried out by one of the *kiai* in the Islamic boarding school on the slopes of Merapi. Every time the leaders fill the recitation or the like, both in people's homes and in places of worship. The *kiai* on duty is prohibited from delivering *tausiyah* material related to hatred and demonizing other residents who have different ritual methods.

Meanwhile, Emile Durkheim provides a view that religion is a belief system united by practices related to sacred things (Johnson, 1994). For Durkheim, religion is oriented towards something that is formulated by humans as something sacred, valued and very extraordinary. Durkheim also considered that religion is not an illusion, but rather a social fact that can be identified and has social importance. Meanwhile, one of the social functions of religion is to support and preserve the existing society. This function is closely related to the fulfillment of human needs to maintain the continuity of life and maintain it. Sociologically, there are two functions of religion, namely positive functions and negative functions. Durkheim saw the function of religion in relation to social solidarity (Durkheim, 1984). For him religion has a function to unite members of society, religion fulfills the need for society to periodically uphold and strengthen collective feelings and ideas. Religion encourages social solidarity by uniting believers into a community that shares the same value perspective. This is also what is practiced by the Ngargomulyo community. Moderate and tolerant attitudes can be realized through cultural activities led by the village head and supported by various elements of the youth group as well as the participation of leaders from various religions. This routine cultural activity that is still preserved is a forum for interaction between them, and finally one another can understand by implementing the patterns that have been running. At this moment, mechanical solidarity will be able to run optimally, where

the collective awareness that is built will be able to strengthen religious moderation.

The role of community leaders

The role of community leaders in building a tolerant attitude in a pluralistic society is very important, as has been exemplified in Ngargomulyo Village, given the social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity that exists in Indonesia. Community leaders, be they religious leaders, traditional leaders, local leaders, or respected figures, have a major influence in shaping community attitudes and views (A. Abdullah, 2016; Farihah, 2014).

A leader is an example for the community in strengthening moderation, so their position should ideally be as follows:

1. As an example of tolerance

Community leaders who have integrity and respect for diversity can be an example for the community in terms of tolerance. This can be shown through mutual respect between groups (Khafidhotunnur & Farihah, 2019). So that they can inspire others to do what they have modeled. For example, a religious leader who conveys the concept of love and mutual respect to the community can be shown from their attitude to their closest neighbors and without looking at their respective religions or groups.

2. Counselors and educators in improving religious and social understanding

Community leaders have the capacity to educate the community on the importance of tolerance values through socialization in activities at the village or RT (neighborhood association) level. They can organize activities such as discussions, seminars or training on the importance of respecting differences, especially in pluralistic communities. In this way, they can help reduce tensions between different groups, and provide a deeper understanding that diversity in society is a shared asset.

3. Motivating Intergroup Dialogue

Community leaders often have extensive networks in various circles. They can be facilitators in creating spaces for encounter through interfaith dialog. Intergroup dialog is important to foster mutual understanding and overcome tensions that may arise due to differences (Ajudin, 2017). Community leaders can organize meetings between group or community leaders to talk about sensitive issues, especially those that occur in each village and find solutions to achieve peace.

4. Maintaining Social Harmony Through Mediation

When there is conflict or disagreement between different groups, community leaders often act as mediators for those in conflict. They can help steer productive communication and reconcile the disputing parties, by pointing out the shared values that can unite them. In this case, the role of community leaders is

central to maintaining the social harmony that has been well maintained in Ngargomulyo Village.

5. Liaising between the government and the community

Community leaders also act as a liaison between the government, religious leaders, and the community. They can convey aspirations and problems faced by the community to the authorities and vice versa. In the context of a pluralistic society, they can be a voice to fight for policies that can support intergroup harmony and tolerance, and reduce policies that have the potential to trigger division.

6. Raising Awareness of Human Rights

Community leaders who understand human rights can play a role in socializing the importance of respecting the rights of others, especially for marginalized groups. This is important so that people not only learn to be tolerant, but also to respect each other's right to life and freedom.

7. Overcoming Radicalization and Intolerance

Community leaders also have a very important role in overcoming radicalization and intolerance that can develop in a pluralistic society. They can provide a correct understanding of peaceful religions, cultures or ideologies, and counter extremism that goes against national values and diversity.

8. Building Social Solidarity

With their respected and trusted presence, community leaders can build social solidarity among citizens. They can organize social activities that involve various groups, such as gotong royong, celebrating religious holidays, or other social activities that can strengthen relationships between different groups (Farihah & Ismanto, 2019; Naamy, 2017).

The importance of the role of community leaders, both from the village government and religious leaders. Of course, enlightened figures who are essentially a form of implementation of *ulul albab* in the Qur'anic scheme, according to Ali Shariati (M. A. Abdullah, 2015), are *da'i* or in this context are religious figures who have characteristics including: 1) having a pluralist attitude, so as to be able to view a religious truth in a universal-holistic level, with the attitude of *al-hanafiyyatu al-samhah* as its axis, and having the ability to conduct dialog in the framework of *ta'alaui kalimat in sawa'* with other parties. 2) Having a comprehensive scientific view in social fields, so that positioning and understanding society is not seen from the perspective of the religion he believes in. This does not mean that religious leaders in Ngargomulyo and their citizens follow all the religious rituals of others. 3) Having scientific insight/open-mindedness or inclusiveness.

4) Mempunyai daya kepedulian sosial dan wawasan lingkungan yang cukup, misal dengan saling *tepo seliro* dengan diimbangi pengetahuan yang dimiliki. 5) Berikhtiar untuk mengikuti perkembangan yang terjadi, baik skala lokal maupun nasional.

Have sufficient social awareness and environmental insight, for example by having mutual tepo sliro balanced with the knowledge they have. 5) Make an effort to keep up with developments that occur, both locally and nationally.

Maturity as a community leader and making others feel safe and not threatened by one of the majority religions. Therefore, it is important for leaders to hold several principles in assisting pluralistic societies, including: First, a community leader from both government and religious leaders has the ability to understand the heterogeneity of society. Secondly, uniting the different communities in Ngargomulyo should negate the elements of hatred. Therefore, the essence of strengthening religious moderation carried out by community leaders ideally involves dialog in an "ihsan" manner full of wisdom, care, patience, and compassion. Third, the role of community leaders is carried out wisely, sincerely and without coercion. Fourth, avoiding the attitude of demonizing other religions or ideas, which are different from what we believe. Fifth, having the ability to instill a tolerant attitude both between religions and within religions. Thus, the role of community leaders in uniting the different religions on the slopes of Merapi will be increasingly visible, not just being a mubasyiran wa nazhiran, but automatically becoming a mobilizer and catalyst for changes in the community (agent of change) towards the future direction in the balance of the dimensions of the world and the hereafter (Anas, 2006; Fariyah, 2014).

Several efforts need to be considered in harmony. First, the wisdom to organize all specs of life to deal with and reduce any conflicts that occur in a heterogeneous society, starting from the community in general to the leaders in the village. Second, efforts to understand religion as a whole in accordance with the guidance for each religious adherent where it is closely related to the future. Third, transparency in every religion and respect for each other's differences because it is sunatullah so it should be used as an understanding. Fourth, traditional and religious leaders must have a wise, wise, and patient attitude to become a barrier and glue in social relations. Thus it can be said that to realize the existence of a wise attitude, mutual understanding, respect, and make differences as cultural wealth not only study their own religion and culture, but also be open to studying other religions and other cultures, of course it is a must to realize the spirit of tolerance (Rahman & Noor, 2020).

Another effort needed in the dimension of building a moderate attitude is through interfaith and cross-cultural dialog, so that there is a sense of mutual understanding of the concept of divinity of each religion and their respective cultural structures (Maksum, 2011). It is hoped that the implementation of this dialog can foster an attitude of openness, willingness to listen to others, and the main thing is mutual respect. All of this is done to find common ground in every religious community (Sumbulah & Nurjannah, 2013). With the inter-religious dialog that is carried out, pluralism is not only limited to understanding but brings people to build a better way of life.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Uniting the different in a pluralistic society is not a simple matter, requiring a strong strategy and commitment. Ngargomulya Village, which has been living in harmony amidst religious and cultural diversity, is inseparable from the role of each community leader. Overall, community leaders have a very strategic role in creating and maintaining tolerance in a pluralistic society. They not only provide examples in action, but also function as liaisons, mediators and educators who encourage a deeper understanding of diversity. Thus, their role is decisive in building a harmonious, peaceful and tolerant society.

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