

Wayang Potehi at Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo, Jombang, Indonesia: An Effort to Preserve the Culture and Religious Moderation

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Abstract

Indonesia's rich cultural and religious diversity offers a unique context to explore how traditional arts contribute to social harmony. This article examines the *Wayang Potehi* performance at the Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo, Jombang, and its role in promoting religious moderation. It highlights how performing arts are an inclusive platform that celebrates cultural and religious diversity, fostering tolerance and coexistence. The Hong San Kiong Temple, as a center for religious and cultural activities, provides an ideal setting to observe the integration of traditional arts like *Wayang Potehi* in pluralistic societies. The research uses a qualitative approach, including participatory observation, interviews, and document analysis, to understand how religious moderation is reflected in the performances. Findings indicate that *Wayang Potehi* conveys messages of moderation through its themes and the interaction between performers and audiences. These performances emphasize inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diverse cultures and religions. The Hong San Kiong Temple's efforts to promote religious moderation through these arts highlight a positive initiative that brings together diverse communities. This article offers valuable insights into how traditional arts can foster religious moderation and underscores the potential of performing arts in religious spaces to bridge divides in multicultural societies.

Keanekaragaman budaya dan agama di Indonesia menawarkan konteks yang unik untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana seni tradisional berkontribusi pada keharmonisan sosial. Artikel ini mengkaji pertunjukan

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Wayang Potehi di Klenteng Hong San Kiong di Gudo, Jombang, dan peranrya dalam mempromosikan moderasi beragama. Artikel ini menyoroti bagaimana seni pertunjukan berfungsi sebagai platform inklusif yang merayakan keragaman budaya dan agama, memupuk toleransi dan hidup berdampingan. Klenteng Hong San Kiong, sebagai pusat kegiatan keagamaan dan budaya, menyediakan tempat yang ideal untuk mengamati integrasi seni tradisional seperti Wayang Potehi dalam masyarakat majemuk. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, termasuk observasi partisipatif, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, untuk memahami bagaimana moderasi agama tercermin dalam pertunjukan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Wayang Potehi menyampaikan pesan-pesan moderasi melalui tema-tema dan interaksi antara pemain dan penonton. Pertunjukan ini menekankan inklusivitas, toleransi, dan penghormatan terhadap budaya dan agama yang beragam. Upaya Klenteng Hong San Kiong untuk mempromosikan moderasi beragama melalui kesenian ini menyoroti inisiatif positif yang menyatukan berbagai komunitas. Artikel ini menawarkan wawasan yang berharga tentang bagaimana seni tradisional dapat berkontribusi dalam mendorong moderasi beragama dan menggarisbawahi potensi seni pertunjukan di ruang keagamaan untuk menjembatani kesenjangan dalam masyarakat multikultural.

Keywords: Chinese culture; glove puppet; interreligious harmony; Jombang; *wayang potehi*

Introduction

Religious diversity and ancestral beliefs have historically been a source of conflict in Indonesia. According to a report released by KBR.id on December 23, 2022, the rate of ethnic and religious conflict in Indonesia remains significantly high. One type of violation frequently occurs is attacks on places of worship, which infringe upon Freedom of Religion/Belief (Kebebasan Bergama dan Berkeyakinan) (Wardani, 2022). Data collected by the Human Rights NGO Setara Institute from 2007 to 2022 recorded 140 incidents of destruction targeting places of worship and 90 incidents of rejection regarding the construction of places of worship.

Ethnic and religious conflicts may arise from differences in identity and pride (Digdoyo, 2018, p. 44). When ethnic or religious groups possess strong identities and feel a deep sense of pride in their group, these differences can serve as sources of conflict. Feelings of superiority, nationalism, ethnic pride, and beliefs in religious exclusivity may contribute to tensions between groups.

In addition, significant social and economic inequality between ethnic or religious groups can act as a trigger for conflict (Aisyah BM, 2014). Disparities in the distribution of resources, access to employment, education, or public services can foster dissatisfaction and tensions. Political competition also exacerbates ethnic and religious conflicts. Rivalries over power, influence, or control of resources may deepen divisions (Maarif et al., 2010). Identity politics, the politicization of religion, and political rivalry between groups can further intensify separation and division.

In Indonesian society, cultural harmony and spirituality play a critical role in fostering an inclusive identity and upholding diversity. One concrete manifestation of this harmony can be seen in the *Wayang Potehi* performances at the Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo, Jombang. *Wayang Potehi*, a traditional art form with deep roots in Chinese (Tionghoa) culture, serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a vehicle for promoting religious moderation. This is because *Wayang Potehi* exemplifies harmonious assimilation between Indonesian culture and external cultures (Valentina & Tanumihardjo, 2021, p. 213). Furthermore, *Wayang Potehi* is recognized as a unique performing art in Asia (Fushiki, 2022, p. 323).

The *Wayang Potehi* performance from Gudo, Jombang Regency, also had the opportunity to be showcased in The Hague, Netherlands, from September 1–6, 2022 (Rohmadi, 2022). The Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo is a vital venue for *Wayang Potehi* performances, which are attended by people from various religious backgrounds. Suparno (2017) emphasizes that the audience of *Wayang Potehi* is diverse, encompassing people of different ages, social strata, genders, religions, and cultures. The audience not only includes Chinese-Indonesians but also Javanese descendants. In this context, *Wayang Potehi* acts as a bridge connecting different social groups in society, fostering inclusiveness by removing barriers that separate one group from another.

The Hong San Kiong Temple, as the setting of *Wayang Potehi* performances, stands as a living testament to how this traditional art form integrates the values of religious moderation in every performance. The

balance between Chinese cultural heritage and inclusive spiritual teachings reinforces the message of religious moderation in a heterogeneous society.

Research on religious moderation through culture has been carried out by several scholars, including Muhammad Nur in his study on the local wisdom of *Sintuwu Maroso* as a symbol of religious moderation. He concluded that religious moderation is essential for maintaining diversity and building awareness of the importance of balance in religion. This local wisdom, such as *Mesale* (mutual cooperation), embodies noble values that are vital for the social life of the community. The *Sintuwu Maroso* culture is integral to the identity of the Pamona Poso Tribe, as reflected in their traditional symbols regional logo, and motto. Strategic policies by regional governments, such as promoting participation in traditional festivals, incorporating local content in education, and preserving cultural values, serve as steps to foster religious moderation and strengthen social cohesion (Nur, 2020). Similarly, Saragih highlighted that local wisdom is valuable for promoting harmony amidst religious diversity (Saragih, 2022). Regarding research on *Wayang Potehi*, Santoso examined the symbolic meanings embedded in *Wayang Potehi* performances in Gudo Village. He noted that the clothing motifs of the characters hold distinct meanings, symbolizing attributes such as glory, happiness, and courage. For instance, dragon motifs represent kings, tiger heads signify generals, *tao* motifs denote gods, tiger tooth motifs symbolize commanders, and *shou* motifs signify warriors. *Wayang Potehi* incorporates these symbolic elements as a performing art to convey deeper meanings (Santoso, 2018).

This study explores how the implementation of religious moderation is manifested through *Wayang Potehi* performances at Hong San Kiong Temple, Gudo, Jombang. It examines how this traditional art form serves as a medium for promoting inclusive religious moderation fostering respect for cultural and religious diversity. A qualitative approach is employed, incorporating participatory observation, interviews, and document analysis, using established indicators of religious moderation in Indonesia. The primary informants include the head of the *Wayang Potehi* management, the

Wayang Potehi puppeteer, and the head of the religious affairs department at Hong San Kiong Temple, Gudo, Jombang.

The significance of this research lies in the context of Indonesia's rich and complex diversity. In an era of globalization, where cross-cultural interactions are increasing, understanding how traditional art forms like *Wayang Potehi* can serve as inclusive mediums is crucial. This research explores how cultural harmony and spirituality are reflected in *Wayang Potehi* performances and their role in promoting religious moderation within a diverse society.

Culture as a Symbol of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is a balanced understanding of religion reflected in an individual's attitude (Zubair et al., 2022). This balance emphasizes the middle-way principle in religious practice, which prevents individuals from adopting extreme views and encourages fairness and equilibrium (Balitbang Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2019). Efforts to foster moderate religious understanding and attitudes in Indonesia involve all societal elements, particularly the government, through various initiatives to internalize moderate religious values and avoid extremism. Both formal and non-formal educational institutions play a strategic role in integrating these efforts (Zaman et al., 2022). Government intervention in preserving and maintaining the noble values of ancestral heritage is particularly significant in achieving religious moderation (Nur, 2020). In this context, culture can be interpreted as a symbol of religious moderation, demonstrated through the collaborative efforts of government and society to preserve cultural heritage as an integral part of identity and cherished moderation values. Culture becomes a tangible representation of balance and tolerance in religious life.

Ernst Cassirer argued that humans are symbolic beings (Sari, 2022), and symbolic thinking and behavior are fundamental to human culture and all cultural advancements (Auxier, 2018). Culture is a domain rich in symbols (Dewi, 2022). Human cultures utilize symbols to express ideologies, represent social structures, and convey specific aspects of their identity (Liliweri, 2021).

As a symbol of religious moderation, culture plays a crucial role in expressing and embodying balanced and moderate religious values. Koentjaraningrat (1990) identifies three forms of culture: a system of ideas, a system of activities, and a system of artifacts. In the context of religious moderation, culture as a system of ideas reflects the social norms that guide individuals in their religious practices.

As part of the cultural system of ideas, these norms help individuals practice religion in a balanced manner, avoiding extremism and understanding religious teachings in daily life. For example, social norms can encourage tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and a non-violent approach to addressing differences in beliefs.

Furthermore, culture as a system of activities fosters social interactions that shape attitudes and values of religious moderation. Traditional ceremonies and religious rituals that are inclusive and respectful of diversity are concrete examples of cultural activities promoting religious moderation. Social interactions within these activities cultivate harmonious relationships among individuals from different religious backgrounds.

Meanwhile, culture as a system of artifacts creates visual and material symbols that represent religious moderation. Artistic artifacts, everyday tools, and other forms of artwork reflect cultural diversity and creativity in conveying messages of moderation. This understanding supports the idea that culture, in its tangible and appreciable forms, can symbolize religious moderation, enriching and beautifying daily life.

Culture as a symbol of religious moderation encompasses ritualistic and traditional aspects (Lede, 2022) and embodies inclusivity in embracing and respecting diversity. For instance, in preserving cultural heritage, the government can promote traditional art performances, such as *Wayang Potehi*, to convey messages of religious moderation. In these performances, culture serves as a means to depict harmony, tolerance, and interfaith cooperation. Involving various elements of society, including educational institutions and community leaders, can further enhance understanding and acceptance of moderate values.

The History of *Wayang Potehi* in Hong San Kiong Temple, Gudo, Jombang

One of the Chinese cultural traditions that has been marginalized and is nearing extinction is *Wayang Potehi*. The term “*Potehi*,” derived from Hokkien pronunciation, is composed of the words *Pao* (cloth), *Tay* (bag), and *Hie* (doll). Hence, *Potehi* dolls are also referred to as “pocket dolls.” There are several versions regarding the origins of *Wayang Potehi*. The most popular narrative is that, during the Tang Dynasty (617–918), five prisoners awaiting execution used a rectangular piece of cloth to pass the time. They tied one end of the cloth to resemble a human head and then inserted their index fingers into the knot to manipulate the cloth as characters. Accompanying music was created using eating and cooking utensils. This performance caught the king's attention, who, impressed by their ingenuity, released them as an acknowledgment of this art form (Ryhilda & Hanjani, 2023).

Wayang Potehi performances originated in mainland China and traditionally incorporate narratives from Chinese folklore and history. *Wayang Potehi* arrived in the Indonesian archipelago around the 16th century, brought by Chinese migrants who spread to various parts of the world. These migrants, predominantly from the Hokkien ethnic group in southern China, introduced the art form to the region (TH, interview, 2023).

Initially, Chinese communities in the archipelago were largely centered on economic and trade activities. However, they also introduced and cultivated various arts and cultural practices from their homeland, such as the *Barongsai* and *Wayang Potehi*. These activities were typically conducted in temples, which initially served as places of worship for Confucian adherents. Temples became venues for *Wayang Potehi* performances, especially during Chinese New Year or Cap Go Meh celebrations, and these shows were open to the public (TH, interview, 2023).

One temple that continues to hold *Wayang Potehi* performances and remains committed to preserving this art form is the Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo Village, southwest of Jombang, East Java. Since the early

20th century, this temple has been recognized as a “center” of *Wayang Potehi*. During this period, a renowned *Wayang Potehi* puppeteer (*dalang*), Tok Su Khuwei, resided in Gudo (W, interview, 2023).

Tok Su Khuwei migrated from China to Gudo alongside other workers brought in by the Dutch East Indies government to serve as technicians in sugar factories in Jombang. Tok Su Khuwei performed *Wayang Potehi* using his expertise during Chinese New Year celebrations. According to Toni Harsono (Tok Hong Lay), the grandson of Tok Su Khuwei, local audiences were highly enthusiastic about these performances, even though *Wayang Potehi* was performed in Mandarin at the time (TH, interview, 2023).

The use of Mandarin presented challenges for native Indonesians wishing to perform *Wayang Potehi*. Tok Su Khuwei eventually passed down his puppeteering skills to his son, Tok Hong Kie. Tok Hong Kie became a prominent *dalang* who witnessed the transition of *Wayang Potehi* through the pre-independence, independence, and New Order eras. However, becoming a recognized *dalang* required significant effort. Tok Hong Kie apprenticed under several established *Wayang Potehi* puppeteers before earning the status to perform independently (TH, interview, 2023).

Political changes in the mid-1960s significantly impacted the life of *Wayang Potehi* in Indonesia. No temple dared to perform *Wayang Potehi* in several major cities, including Solo, Semarang, Surabaya, and Jakarta. However, the government ban did not affect Gudo. Tok Hong Kie, one of the central figures in *Wayang Potehi* activities during the New Order era, felt safe continuing his performances (Soedjatmoko, 2015).

According to Toni Harsono, the head of *Wayang Potehi* management, between 1970 and 1980, *Wayang Potehi* and *Barongsai* could still be performed, even though the New Order’s Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (*Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban* - Kopkamtib) imposed strict surveillance on every aspect of social and cultural life. He explained that some Chinese residents provided guarantees to the authorities to ensure that *Wayang Potehi* performances would not be banned (TH, interview, 2023).

One day, Toni was inspired to revive *Wayang Potehi* after it had been dormant for several years following his father's passing. While managing the temple, he discovered *Potehi* puppets scattered in the temple warehouse. The sight reminded him of how his grandfather and father had used these puppets in their performances. Motivated by this memory, Toni invited friends to revive *Wayang Potehi*. However, he acknowledged that the excitement and public enthusiasm surrounding *Wayang Potehi* performances in the past could not be fully recaptured.

Today, on a national scale, Gudo has become the center of *Wayang Potehi's* development. In some areas, *Wayang Potehi* is experiencing a revival. However, *Wayang Potehi* in Gudo has not only returned to the stage but has also evolved by producing puppet craftsmen, managers, and puppeteers. Previously, the *dalang* (puppeteers) of *Wayang Potehi* were predominantly Chinese, but now puppeteers from Javanese backgrounds have taken on the role. This shift demonstrates that *Wayang Potehi* in Gudo has undergone a transformation and assimilation. It is no longer exclusively associated with a particular ethnic community. The language used in performances has also changed, shifting from Mandarin to a mixture of Indonesian and Javanese (Stenberg, 2015).

Wayang Potehi Gudo now represents social harmony within the local community and can be enjoyed by people regardless of their ethnicity or background. The Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo, Jombang, has become a renowned center for *Wayang Potehi*, recognized not only in Indonesia but also internationally. The art form has been performed in countries such as the Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, France, and Italy (N, interview, 2023).

Portrait of Religious Moderation Values in the *Wayang Potehi* Art Performance at Hong San Kiong Temple, Gudo Jombang

Religious moderation is deeply rooted in Confucian traditions. Devout and virtuous Confucians view life through the lens of yin and yang, representing the philosophy, thought, and spirituality of those seeking to live in accordance with the Dao. Yin and yang symbolize the Middle Way,

avoiding extremism. Both deficiency and excess are seen as undesirable (Tim Peneliti Balitbang Agama RI, 2018). The Middle Way does not signify a lack of principle but rather steadfast adherence to one's principles. These principles are based on love and humanity (*ren*) and justice and truth (*yi*), not on anything else. By committing to these principles, a virtuous and devout person consistently acts with propriety (*li*) and wisdom (*zhi*), becoming someone who is trustworthy (*xin*) and courageous (*yong*).

In an interview with Mr. Tony, religious moderation in traditional cultural arts, such as *Wayang Potehi*, can be identified through several aspects: 1) *Wayang Potehi* performances are not only enjoyed by the Chinese community but also involve diverse groups, including local and international audiences, both descendants and indigenous citizens. This demonstrates cultural inclusivity and acceptance. 2) *Wayang Potehi* groups exhibit flexibility in their performance material, incorporating not only Chinese legends but also adapting local and religious stories, such as the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. This reflects openness to various religious traditions and beliefs. 3) Efforts to preserve the art of *Wayang Potehi* involve the younger generation, with year-long performance plans aimed at fostering a new generation of performers. This highlights the importance of transferring cultural knowledge to future generations. 4) Collaboration between *Wayang Potehi* and *Ketoprak Potehi* in performances, such as those at Sekertaji Kediri Park, reflects mutual respect and the spirit of sharing between various art forms. 5) Despite past prohibitions on *Wayang Potehi* performances, the local community in Gudo fully supported the group, demonstrating tolerance and acceptance at the local level.

Further elements of religious moderation, as shared in an interview with Mr. Widodo, the puppeteer of *Wayang Potehi*, include: 1) Engaging in inclusive religious activities, such as performances at churches, temples, and Islamic boarding schools, regardless of religious differences. 2) Recognizing *Wayang Potehi* as a shared cultural heritage of the Indonesian people, performing in places of worship across various religions and promoting interreligious harmony. 3) The majority of *Wayang Potehi* performers in

Indonesia are Muslims, reflecting inclusivity and cross-religious participation in arts and culture. 4) Embracing *Wayang Potehi* as part of Indonesia's cultural diversity, demonstrating an open attitude toward cultural diversity. 5) *Wayang Potehi* performances aim to foster harmony between religious communities, emphasizing values of togetherness. 6) Performing in diverse venues, not just temples, showcases inclusivity in presenting cultural arts. 7) Delivering messages of harmony, promoting values of mutual aid and non-discrimination. 8) Collaborating with NGOs, government bodies, and cultural associations highlights a spirit of cooperation beyond religious boundaries. 9) Participating in interfaith events, such as religious ceremonies outside temples, demonstrates interfaith collaboration. 10) Offering free training to people from diverse religious backgrounds underscores inclusivity in preserving arts and culture. 11) Beyond entertainment, *Wayang Potehi* plays a social role, participating in events like carnivals and large gatherings, emphasizing cultural arts as tools for moderation and integration.

These views are reinforced by Mrs. Nanik, a Religious Officer at the Hong San Kiong Temple in Gudo Jombang. She highlighted several indicators of religious moderation in *Wayang Potehi* performances: 1) *Wayang Potehi* is not limited to specific groups or religions; it collaborates with other performing arts such as *Ketoprak* and *Keroncong*, reflecting openness to interaction with other communities and beliefs. 2) Performances are open to all, regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity. Indigenous performers also participate, wearing costumes and, at times, engaging in religious rituals, such as prayer. 3) The stories performed, such as those from *The Three Kingdoms*, carry moral and philosophical messages, emphasizing universal values that resonate with various religious beliefs. 4) *Wayang Potehi* participates in interfaith religious events, such as Gus Dur's commemoration, demonstrating respect and support for diverse religious activities. 5) Performances are not confined to temples but also take place in locations such as grand mosques, symbolizing tolerance for diverse places of worship. 6) *Wayang Potehi* actively engages in community activities, such as carnivals and Chinese New Year celebrations, showcasing its role in multicultural and

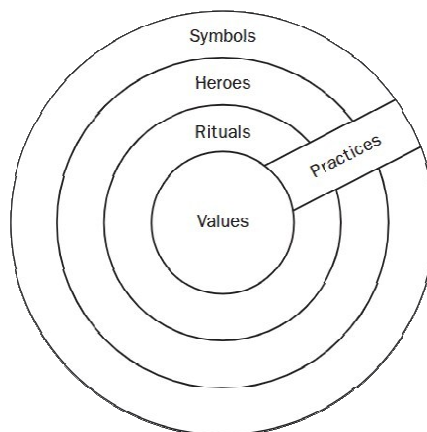
interfaith community life. 7) International performances in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Rome demonstrate the global appreciation and acceptance of this traditional Chinese art form.

The Manifestation of Religious Moderation in *Wayang Potehi* Art Performance at Hong San Kiong Temple, Gudo, Jombang

As formulated by Hofstede et al., cultural manifestations encompass four key concepts: symbols, rituals, heroes, and values (Hofstede et al., 2005). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between these concepts.

Symbols are words, gestures, images, or objects that convey meaning, recognizable only to groups of people sharing the same culture (Masruroh et al., 2022). These symbols include words, signs, gestures, images, or objects that hold particular meanings and values within a society. The use of these symbols fosters group identity, communicates meaning, and expresses cultural values. Symbols occupy the outermost layer of cultural manifestation because symbols belonging to one cultural group may gradually be adopted by other cultural groups.

Figure 1
The “Onion”: Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth



Source: Hofstede et al. (2005).

A hero is a person, living or deceased, real or imaginary, who embodies characteristics highly valued within a culture, thereby serving as a model for societal behavior (Masruroh et al., 2022). In individualistic societies, heroes are often admired for their extraordinary personal accomplishments, strong leadership, or independent goal achievement. Conversely, in collectivist societies, heroes are valued for their contributions to the common good, emphasizing teamwork and group-oriented leadership.

Rituals are collective activities regarded as essential by a society within a cultural context (Masruroh et al., 2022). These include discourse, the use of language in spoken texts, behaviors in daily interactions, and communication of beliefs. Examples include greeting customs, showing respect, and religious procedures. One cultural dimension relevant to understanding rituals is Uncertainty Avoidance, which reflects how a society manages uncertainty and change. In societies with high levels of Uncertainty Avoidance, rituals play a significant role in providing structure and order, thereby reducing uncertainty and offering a sense of security. Consequently, cultures with high Uncertainty Avoidance often exhibit strict rituals and strong social norms.

Based on the figure above, symbols, heroes, and rituals are expressed through observable actions, allowing outsiders to perceive and interpret the cultural meanings revealed by these elements. However, it is important to note that the deeper values underlying these manifestations are best understood through the interpretations of cultural actors themselves.

These values include tendencies influenced by rational thought and moral reasoning. Examples encompass concepts such as clean/dirty, right/wrong, good/evil, safe/dangerous, prohibited/permitted, and rational/irrational (Hofstede et al., 2005). While symbolic acts, heroes, and rituals are visible, their true significance lies in the meaning attributed to them within their cultural context. These values reflect the worldview and beliefs that guide individual and group actions. Thus, uncovering these hidden values requires looking beyond observable behaviors to understand the underlying thoughts and emotions.

In the context of Hofstede's theory of cultural manifestations, the research findings align with the four key concepts of symbols, heroes, rituals,

and values. Symbolically, *Wayang Potehi* is not merely a traditional Chinese performing art but also a representation of inclusivity. *Wayang Potehi* performances serve as a medium to symbolize the acceptance of various social groups and religious beliefs, promoting harmony and interfaith understanding. This harmony is depicted in the following Figure 2 and 3.

Figure 2

The *Wayang Potehi* Character Showcasing Elements of Javanese *Wayang*



Source: Research Documentation.

Figure 3

Kartini's Character in *Wayang Potehi*



Source: Research Documentation.

WAYANG POTEHI AT HONG SAN KIONG TEMPLE IN GUDO, JOMBANG

In terms of heroes, the characters in *Wayang Potehi* performances represent heroic figures who convey universal moral and ethical values. The narratives often inspire audiences to internalize virtues such as goodness, justice, and mutual respect. The concept of rituals encompasses repetitive practices that bring meaning and structure to people's lives. The collaboration between various performing arts, such as *Wayang Potehi*, *Ketoprak*, and *Keroncong*, can be regarded as a cultural ritual celebrating artistic and cultural diversity. Participation in specific events, such as performances at grand mosques or *Gusdurian* commemorations, may also be seen as interfaith rituals. This inclusivity is illustrated in Figure 4.

Value lies at the deep level of culture and is directly proportional to trust (Gudykunst, 2003). Thus, the existence of values is inherently subtle and can only be inclusively manifested by individuals who comprehend them. Values serve as social controls that guide individuals in their interactions, particularly in intercultural settings. The values embedded within an

Figure 4

Wayang Potehi Performance at the Cultural Diversity of Jombang Community Communication Forum (December 2, 2023).



Source: Research Documentation.

individual significantly shape how they interact and communicate with others. In simple terms, Geertz suggested that culture operates as a set of control mechanisms. According to Geertz, the concept of control mechanisms in a cultural context refers to a series of systems comprising plans, rules, and instructions designed to regulate human behavior. Geertz consistently emphasized that culture centers on values, which act as a compass guiding human behavior (Ryhilda & Hanjani, 2023). Through its stories, *Wayang Potehi* conveys universal values that resonate with various religious groups. Core values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and inter-religious harmony are central to *Wayang Potehi* performances.

According to Hasan, the principle of moderation in Islam can be explained as follows: 1) Striving to live a balanced life (*tawassuṭ*). 2) Maintaining balance in all aspects (*tawāzun*). 3) Upholding honesty and fairness (*i'tidāl*). 4) Being open and tolerant of differences (*tasāmuḥ*). 5) Respecting and promoting equality (*musāwah*). 6) Making decisions through consultation and deliberation (*shūrā*). 7) Striving for improvement and reform (*iṣlāḥ*). 8) Prioritizing essential matters (*aulawiyah*). 9) Being dynamic and innovative in responding to changes (*taṭawwur wa ibtikār*). 10) Demonstrating a civilized attitude in all aspects of life (*taḥazzur*) (Hasan, 2021).

In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia outlines four key indicators of religious moderation: 1) Commitment to nationalism. 2) Tolerance. 3) Rejection of violence. 4) Accommodation of local culture. These indicators are essential for assessing an individual's strength in practicing religious moderation in Indonesia and for identifying vulnerabilities. Recognizing such vulnerabilities allows for the implementation of appropriate measures to strengthen religious moderation (Tim Peneliti Balitbang Agama RI, 2018).

Based on field data obtained by the researchers, the manifestation of religious moderation in *Wayang Potehi* performances seeks to foster cultural harmony and spirituality: 1) Striving for balance (*tawassuṭ*) by showing cultural inclusivity and acceptance are demonstrated through *Wayang Potehi*

performances, which are enjoyed by diverse audiences, including local, international, and individuals from various religious backgrounds. Inclusivity is also reflected in the involvement of Javanese Muslim-descended musicians and puppeteers. This aligns with Stenberg's research, which highlights the strategy of non-Chinese-speaking communities in East and Central Java to adopt an integrated Indonesian identity (Stenberg, 2015). Similarly, Alam (2023) and Mastuti (Mastuti, 2024) describe *Wayang Potehi* as the product of Chinese-Javanese cultural assimilation over centuries. 2) Maintaining balance (*tawāzun*); it is the flexibility in storytelling demonstrated by incorporating narratives from both Chinese and local cultures, including religious stories such as the birth of Jesus, the voyages of Admiral Cheng Ho, and tales of Javanese wayang or historical figures like R. A. Kartini. 3) Preserving art through generational transfer (*iṣlāḥ*); the involvement of younger generations highlights an awareness of the importance of transferring cultural knowledge to ensure its continuity. 4) Cooperation and mutual support (*aulawiyah*); the collaborations of *Wayang Potehi* with *Ketoprak Potehi* and other cultural institutions underscore a spirit of cooperation and mutual support across religious differences. 5) Emphasizing messages of harmony in the performance (*musāwah*); the moral and ethical messages conveyed in *Wayang Potehi* performances strengthen the narrative of religious moderation. 6) Fostering inclusivity (*taṭawwur wa ibtikār*); Participation in interfaith religious events further demonstrates the inclusivity inherent in *Wayang Potehi*.

The *Wayang Potehi* performances at Hong San Kiong Gudo Temple have similarly demonstrated religious moderation in accordance with the indicators set by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. First, the *Wayang Potehi* performances at Hong San Kiong Gudo Temple demonstrate a commitment to nationality by involving diverse audiences, including students and local communities. The inclusive nature of these performances promotes national awareness and unity amidst diversity. Second, *Wayang Potehi* is performed at various places of worship, including mosques and temples, reflecting a high degree of tolerance. The

performances bring together people from different religious backgrounds and cultures, and the stories conveyed promote mutual respect and harmony. Third, the *Wayang Potehi* performances serve as a cultural medium that emphasizes moral and ethical messages without resorting to violence. They promote values such as mutual assistance and community spirit, aiming to foster peace and harmony in society. Fourth, the performances at Hong San Kiong Gudo Temple show accommodation to local culture by adapting local stories and collaborating with traditional arts like *Ketoprak*. This adaptability reflects openness to local traditions and efforts to blend Chinese cultural elements with Indonesian local culture.

The correlation between the research findings and Hofstede's cultural dimensions shows that *Wayang Potehi* functions as social glue, containing symbols, heroes, rituals, and values that are both inclusive and universal. Chinese cultural practices embedded in *Wayang Potehi* performances form a foundation for religious moderation, acceptance of diversity, and the reinforcement of cultural identity without compromising shared universal values.

Hofstede's concept of cultural manifestation emphasizes that culture is reflected in human behavior, encompassing values, norms, and actions. The four main dimensions of Hofstede's framework—power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and future versus past orientation—offer insights into the cultural aspects of *Wayang Potehi* (Liliweri, 2019).

Although Hofstede's framework does not specifically discuss Islam or religion, its concepts can help us understand the relationship between the findings on *Wayang Potehi* and the principles of moderate Islam. For example, *Wayang Potehi* demonstrates inclusiveness and acceptance of various societal groups, reflecting the value of collectivism. This aligns with the concept of collectivist culture, which emphasizes the importance of togetherness and mutual involvement (Etikawati et al., 2019).

The flexibility in *Wayang Potehi's* performance material and its adaptation to local and religious stories indicate an open attitude toward

differences and uncertainty. This can be linked to the cultural concept of uncertainty avoidance. The collaboration between the *Wayang Potehi* group and the *Ketoprak* group and their participation in major events highlights the significance of cooperation and mutual support. It corresponds to the collectivist culture and efforts to reduce uncertainty. Furthermore, involvement in inclusive religious events reflects an accommodating attitude toward uncertainty and diversity, consistent with uncertainty avoidance and tolerance for religious differences. The stories depicted in *Wayang Potehi* performances, especially those conveying moral and philosophical messages, reflect past and future orientations, showcasing the continuity of cultural values. Additionally, free training to all individuals, regardless of religious background, illustrates an inclusive and open approach to uncertainty.

Although Hofstede's framework does not explicitly address religion, its concepts effectively illuminate the cultural aspects of *Wayang Potehi*, which align with the principles of moderate Islam. This correlation underscores that *Wayang Potehi* embodies moderate Islamic values and represents cultural inclusivity, flexibility, cooperation, and tolerance for differences. Ruizendaal aptly describes *Wayang Potehi* as a treasure trove of religious culture, history, ethics, and entertainment for Asian societies (Ruizendaal, 2020).

It aligns with the goals of religious moderation outlined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which emphasizes that religious moderation encourages believers not to isolate themselves or adopt exclusivity but rather to be inclusive, open, adaptable, and engaged with diverse communities while continually learning and teaching. In this way, religious moderation guides each believer to avoid extremism or excessiveness in responding to diversity, including religious differences and interpretations, and instead to remain fair and balanced, fostering mutual understanding and agreement (Tim Peneliti Balitbang Agama RI, 2018).

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, the *Wayang Potehi* performances at Hong San Kiong Gudo Temple in Jombang serve as an inclusive medium that

manifests religious moderation and cultural harmony. The symbols, heroes, rituals, and values in *Wayang Potehi* correlate with Hofstede's cultural dimensions. *Wayang Potehi* is not merely a traditional Chinese art form but also a symbol of inclusivity, promoting acceptance of diverse social groups and religious beliefs. It functions as a cultural medium celebrating harmony and interfaith cooperation. The heroic characters and stories convey universal moral values such as goodness, justice, and mutual respect. Collaborative efforts between various performing arts—such as *Wayang Potehi*, Ketoprak, and Keroncong—are regarded as cultural rituals celebrating the diversity of arts and culture. Participation in events such as performances at grand mosques or Gusdurian gatherings is interpreted as an interfaith ritual. *Through its narratives, Wayang Potehi promotes universal values, including tolerance, mutual respect, and harmony among religious communities.* These values form the core of *Wayang Potehi* performances and are widely embraced by various religious groups.

Thus, the *Wayang Potehi* at the Hong San Kiong Gudo Temple in Jombang is not merely an expression of Chinese cultural arts but also a social adhesive that fosters religious moderation, acceptance of diversity, and the strengthening of cultural identity. It achieves this without compromising shared values that are inclusive and universal. This medium nurtures cultural harmony and spirituality by celebrating differences and encouraging cross-religious collaboration.[w]

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