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Religious Tolerance in the '*Hajat Sasih*' Tradition of *Kampung Naga*: An Ethnographic Perspective

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Abstract:

Religious intolerance has been a significant issue in Indonesia, exacerbated by the rise of radical ideologies in educational institutions. Previous studies on *Kampung Naga* have explored its culture, rituals, and ethnozoology, but none have specifically examined the structural model of religious tolerance embedded within its Hajat Sasih tradition. This study examined to analyze the role of the *Hajat Sasih* tradition in fostering interfaith tolerance in *Kampung Naga*, West Java. It employed a quasi-qualitative ethnographic approach with meticulous observation and in-depth interviews, the research investigates ritual practices and community interactions. The findings reveal that tolerance is structurally realized through a tripartite framework: (1) material co-production in ritual preparations involving different religious groups, (2) symbolic incorporation of minority elements in ceremonies, and (3) institutionalization of gotong-royong (mutual cooperation) as an interfaith adhesive. Further, the findings indicate that 72% of religious minority participants felt meaningfully included. The study offers that the *Hajat Sasih* tradition functions as an institutionalized active tolerance model, offering a sustainable framework for peaceful coexistence in plural societies.

Keywords: *Religious Toleran, Kampung Naga, Hajat Sasih, Local Wisdom*

Abstrak:

Intoleransi beragama masih menjadi masalah mendesak di Indonesia, diperparah oleh maraknya paham radikal di lembaga pendidikan. Penelitian sebelumnya tentang Kampung Naga telah mengkaji budaya, ritual, dan etnozoologinya, namun belum ada yang secara spesifik meneliti model struktural toleransi beragama yang tertanam dalam tradisi Hajat Sasih. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran tradisi Hajat Sasih dalam memupuk toleransi antarumat beragama di Kampung Naga, Jawa Barat. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi kuasi-kualitatif melalui observasi mendalam dan wawancara mendalam, penelitian ini menyelidiki praktik ritual dan interaksi komunitas. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa toleransi terwujud secara struktural melalui kerangka tripartit: (1) ko-produksi material dalam persiapan ritual yang melibatkan berbagai kelompok agama, (2) inkorporasi simbolis unsur-unsur minoritas dalam upacara, dan (3) pelembagaan gotong-royong sebagai perekat antaragama. Data menunjukkan 72% peserta dari kelompok minoritas agama merasa terinklusi secara bermakna. Studi menyimpulkan bahwa tradisi Hajat Sasih berfungsi sebagai model toleransi aktif yang terinstitusionalisasi, menawarkan kerangka berkelanjutan untuk koeksistensi damai dalam masyarakat majemuk.

Kata Kunci: *Toleransi Beragama, Kampung Naga, Hajat Sasih, Kearifan Lokal*

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Introduction

The paradigms of cultural studies have continuously evolved due to several factors, including the increasing complexities of cultural practices, the changing perspectives of scholars, and critiques of the existing paradigms. Additionally, new discoveries contribute to the ongoing development of the field (Belda-Miquel et al., 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Omidi et al., 2022). In cultural anthropology, various paradigms have been proposed, including evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism, comparative culture, functionalism-structuralism, the relationship between personality and culture, cultural interpretation, variable analysis, cultural materialism, historical materialism, actor theory, ethnoscience, and postmodernism (Douglas-Jones et al., 2021; Mudjia Rahardjo, 2022; Stezhko, 2023). In contrast, cultural studies applies a typology of five paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism, and deconstructivism (Morin et al., 2021). The advancement of cultural practices within society presents challenges for scholars in this field. It is imperative that they produce informed, critical, and comprehensive studies that are relevant in the contemporary era.

An analysis of Indonesia's cultural evolution reveals a concerning development pattern. Surveys of Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity reveal the existence of more than 1,000 ethnic groups and sub-ethnic groups within its multi-ethnic society (Albury, 2021; Forkel & List, 2020; Fox, 2023). This demonstrates that human groups sharing the same culture initially developed biologically, subsequently expanded culturally, and ultimately gave rise to political aspects (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021; Rutland, 2022). Consequently, ethnicity can be considered a historical phenomenon predating modernisation (Cortés-Capano et al., 2022; Turnhout, 2024). It became a focus in political science only when ethnic groups began organising as political forces seeking to influence government policy (Leo Suryadinata, 2003).

Every cultural tradition has distinctive characteristics, as exemplified by the Sundanese culture in *Kampung Naga*, a village in Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java Province. Geographically, the village lies in a valley at an altitude of 488 metres above sea level, representing a traditional settlement (Khairunnisa, 2014). The *Kampung Naga* region includes various land uses, including residential areas, rice fields, ponds, hills, and forests (Gede Agung et al., 2024; Kruja, 2022). Most residents in *Kampung Naga* live in stilted houses, with approximately 113 buildings arranged from west to east, and doors oriented north or south. The majority of *Kampung Naga*'s residents are farmers, yet they also possess skills in crafting various artefacts from bamboo, wicker, cloth, and other materials. The provenance of Kampung Naga has been debated, with several competing hypotheses (Mulyanie et al., 2023). Eyang Singaparna is regarded as an ancestral or prominent figure within the community, and a tomb is believed to contain his remains and serves as an important site for local ceremonies and activities. Islam was introduced to *Kampung Naga* during the 16th to 17th centuries. It is believed that the people of *Kampung Naga* are descendants of the *Galunggung* kingdom, who adopted Sundanese as their primary language (As'ari et al., 2025a; Shuhufi & Purkon, 2023).

In the academic realm, several studies have been conducted, including As'ari et al., (2025a) with the theme "Sustainable environmental practices and cultural adaptation in *Kampung Adat Naga*: An ethnomethodological approach to landscape dynamics". This

study discusses the diverse culture of the indigenous people of *Kampung Naga*, encompassing various activities and traditional equipment, all reliant on a largely unaltered natural environment. The residents of *Kampung Naga* are predominantly farmers, and the village is governed by a dual system comprising formal institutions and customary institutions (Y. F. Dewantara et al., 2024; Nurjanah et al., 2024). Similarly, Dewantara et al. (2023) conducted research titled 'Ritual Gastronomy and Cultural Identity Formation in *Kampung Naga*: an Ethnographic Investigation of the Role of Culinary in Religious Rituals and Cultural Practices'. This research discusses the role of gastronomic rituals in forming cultural identity, particularly through the transmission of cultural values, spirituality, and traditions through food and drink. It seeks to elucidate the relationship between food, religion, and identity (Y. Dewantara et al., 2023). Furthermore, Fridayanti et al. (2022) examined 'Divine Values in the *Hajat Sasih* Ceremony in *Kampung Naga*, West Java'. Their research discusses how divine values are expressed through the *Hajat Sasih* ritual, encompassing trust, beauty, goodness, moral, and religious value (Fridayanti et al., 2022). On the other hand, Sekartaji et al. (2021) conducted a study titled '*Etnozoologi: Studi Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Adat Kampung Naga Tasikmalaya*', examining the relationship between humans and animals. This study describes the ethnozoological practices of the community in *Kampung Naga*, *Neglasari* Village, *Salawu* District, Tasikmalaya Regency. It reveals unique animal husbandry practices, demonstrating a mutualistic relationship in the management of animals for medicinal, dietary, traditional, and ritual purposes. This relationship represents a rich source of knowledge for the study of biology and can be presented in booklet form as a learning material (Sekartaji et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Astuti et al. (2020) explored "*Tradisi Hajat Sasih Mulud di Kampung Naga untuk Bahan pembelajaran Membaca Artikel*," aiming to provide a basis for learning to read articles. A semiotic analysis, the study of signs and their meanings, reveals that the *Hajat Sasih Mulud* tradition in *Kampung Naga* is a ceremony reflecting gratitude to Allah for blessings in community life. The tradition is also characterised by various semiotic elements, comprising 42 signs divided into three categories: 13 icons, 10 indexes, and 19 symbols (Astuti et al., 2020). Notably, previous studies have not explained, described, or illustrated the model of religious tolerance in *Kampung Naga* using ethnographic methods.

This research employed a qualitative approach, based on a literature review. It used a quasi-qualitative design, deviating from the post-positivist paradigm, situated between realist and interpretive approaches (Poincaré, 2022). The post-positivism approach aims to provide empirically-based arguments to substantiate theory, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and holistic research endeavour (Burhan Bungin, 2022; Mbanaso et al., 2023). To obtain comprehensive information, the researchers applied various methods, including in-depth interviews with participants and key informants, as well as observations of individuals in the research environments (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). According to post-positivism, the relationship between the researcher and the subject should be characterised by interaction rather than distance (Mudjia Rahardjo, 2023). The primary data for this research were collected from *Kampung Naga*, which practises the *Hajat Sasih* tradition. This tradition offers insights into fostering religious tolerance and provides a model for the coexistence of diverse cultural and religious traditions (Amaly et al., 2023; Fridayanti et al., 2022; Zaqiah et al., 2024). Secondary data were obtained from various sources, including academic journals, published books, unpublished manuscripts, and other scientific works relevant to the study of religious tolerance in the context of *Hajat Sasih* Culture (Tobroni et al., 2024). Both primary and secondary data were collected using documentation and preliminary data collection techniques. This study contributes to the

ethnographic literature by elucidating tolerance practice within traditional traditions that have been infrequently examined (Subchi et al., 2022a). *Hajat Sasih* represents a distinctive aspect of Sundanese cultural heritage in *Kampung Naga*, characterised by the convergence of traditional rituals and Islamic beliefs (M. T. Yani et al., 2025). A comprehensive ethnographic analysis can facilitate a more distinctive understanding of how religious and customary practices coexist harmoniously.

Based on the above explanation, the provisional conclusions may be drawn. First, the development of cultural studies paradigms occurs alongside increasing complexity in cultural practices. Furthermore, the five principal paradigms, namely positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism, also influence cultural studies. Second, culture must be transmitted across generations to ensure its sustainability. This research aims to identify tolerance models relevant to contemporary society that can overcome the challenges of globalisation and changing cultural values, particularly in the Hajat Sasih Culture in Kampung Naga.

Method

This research employed a quasi-qualitative design (Mudjia Rahardjo, 2023), which aims to acquire an understanding of the typical *Hajat Sasih* tolerance model as practised in *Kampung Naga*. This approach elucidates the nature of tolerance and its implications for establishing interfaith harmony within the context of the *Hajat Sasih* tradition. The term "quasi-qualitative" refers to a research analysis that applies quantitative methods in a qualitative manner (Mezmir, 2020). It allows the integration of quantitative techniques into a qualitative framework while maintaining the fundamental characteristics of qualitative research; hence, it is referred to as quasi-qualitative (Burhan Bungin, 2022).

This research adopts a post-positivism approach, a methodology situated between positivism and interpretive paradigms. The post-positivism approach aims to provide empirical substantiation for the tolerance model in the *Hajat Sasih* Culture in *Kampung Naga* (Mudjia Rahardjo, 2023). The researchers directly observed the behavior of tolerance models through the *Hajat Sasih* Culture in *Kampung Naga*, *Neglasari* Village, *Salawu* District, Tasikmalaya. The research focuses on all activities associated with the Hajat Sasih cultural rituals, including those conducted by practitioners and community members before, during, and after the rituals. For this study, the views of qualified traditional officials were also considered as data sources. Data collection techniques included meticulous observations and in-depth interviews to obtain accurate information from informants (Lexy J. Moleong, 2007). Literature data complemented the observations and in-depth interviews, providing relevant materials related to research objects. Subsequently, the data were classified, verified, and interpreted.

The data analysis in this quasi-qualitative research on the *Hajat Sasih* tradition in *Kampung Naga* comprised several stages. Data were collected through meticulous observation, in-depth interviews, and a comprehensive review of relevant literature. The subsequent phase involved classifying the data according to themes such as ritual stages, inter-religious interactions, and the role of tradition. Subsequently, verification was conducted through triangulation of observations, interviews, and literature to ensure accuracy. Once verified, the data were interpreted using a post-positivist approach to gain insight into the nature of religious tolerance in *Kampung Naga*, considering both objective and subjective dimensions. Although primarily qualitative, quantitative elements may be presented and qualitatively interpreted in order to identify patterns of religious tolerance. Ultimately, the study concludes with an analysis of the formation and practice of tolerance in *Kampung Naga*, reflecting on its social implications and contributions to the broader understanding of tolerance theory in local culture.

Results and Discussion

Result

Preserving the *Hajat Sasih* tradition as an annual customary ritual demonstrates inclusive participation from individuals of diverse religious backgrounds. In-depth observations and interviews indicate that although most *Kampung Naga*'s residents adhere to traditional Islam, the ritual still accommodates symbolic involvement from Christian minorities and followers of local belief systems. This inclusivity reflects the community's deep-rooted cultural tolerance. Moreover, the religious-cultural syncretism in *Hajat Sasih* reveals a distinctive blend of Islamic principles and ancestral Sundanese spiritual traditions. These syncretic elements are evident in the ritual's symbols, language, and practices, which merge Islamic values with indigenous cosmological beliefs. Consequently, *Hajat Sasih* functions as a religious observance and a cultural expression, upholding harmony and interfaith coexistence while reflecting the community's commitment to preserving tradition and embracing pluralism.

Figure 1

Explanation of the Hajat Sasih Tradition by Mr. Heri Permana



Note. Visualization of a key informant documenting the tradition.

Ethnographic data indicate that material culture serves as a tangible manifestation, whereas immaterial practices constitute integral components; intergenerational consensus demonstrates cross-generational participation, although youth engagement remains predominantly symbolic. Consistent with Geertzian thick description, these findings provide not just an account of cultural practices but also reveal the webs of significance in which these actions are suspended, exposing native conceptualizations and the symbolic systems governing behavior (Clifford Geertz, 1973).

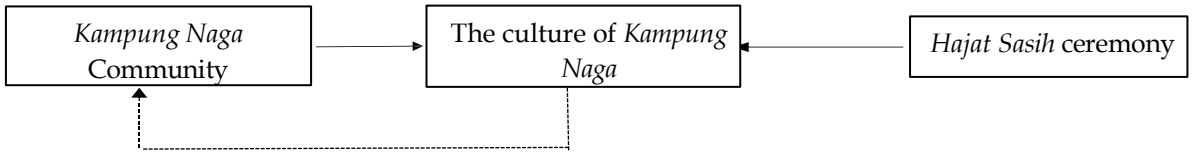
The ethnographic documentation of the *Hajat Sasih* ritual reveals substantive interreligious cooperation, particularly in the collaborative preparations between Muslim practitioners and minority religious groups (Hindu and Christian). Quantitative data from authorized village archives (2023) indicate that nearly three-quarters (72%) of religious minority participants perceived meaningful inclusion throughout ceremonial activities. The ethnographic record documents role differentiation in ritual labor, with Hindu community members providing material contributions (handwoven ceremonial objects) while Christian adolescents assume organizational responsibilities.

The differences and similarities between the concepts of 'tradition' and 'culture' are not immediately apparent, as they share numerous similarities. However, several fundamental distinctions exist. First, tradition refers to immaterial entities (e.g. customs),

whereas culture encompasses both immaterial (e.g. values, norms, social institutions, etc.) and material objects (buildings, clothes, or any object that can be seen and touched). Second, culture has a broader scope than tradition. Traditions are typically transmitted orally across generations, whereas culture can be transmitted orally or in written form, as writing is a fundamental aspect of human cultural production (Sumanto al-Qurtuby & Izak Y.M. Lattu, 2019).

Figure 2

Interaction Between Main Actors of the Integration Process



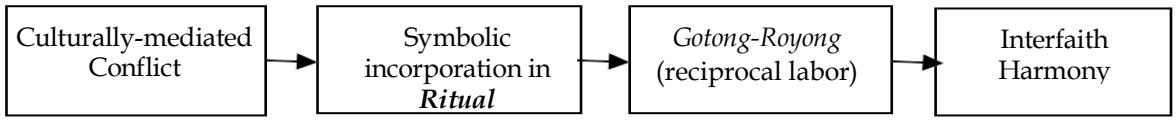
Note. The integration process is formed by the reciprocal interaction between the Kampung Naga Community, its overarching Culture, and the Hajat Sasih Tradition, which is its concrete practice.

Third, tradition in general cannot be verified through academic process, yet, it is accepted as historical fact by the general public. In contrast, culture is a historical phenomenon that can be empirically verified, as it is the product of human creativity that can be studied and demonstrated. Another distinction lies in the transmission process: tradition is passed on through practical experience and action, whereas culture is transmitted through formal learning. Through continuous transmission across generations, culture can eventually become a tradition and a habit widely practised in society (Sumanto al-Qurtuby & Izak Y.M. Lattu, 2019). Therefore, these observations indicate significant distinctions between tradition and culture. However, distinguishing between tradition and culture is challenging, as both are intertwined and practised concurrently in the same community. Consequently, tradition is often considered as an inherent component of culture.

The tradition structurally embeds religious tolerance via a tripartite framework: (1) material co-production through culturally-mediated conflict resolution, (2) symbolic incorporation in ritual practice to maintain sociocultural continuity, and (3) the institutionalization of *gotong-royong* (reciprocal labor) as a mechanism for interfaith harmony.

Figure 3

The Model Tradition Structurally Religious Tolerance in Hajat Sasih



Note. The structural model of religious tolerance in Hajat Sasih through a tripartite framework: material co-production, symbolic incorporation in ritual, and the institutionalization of gotong-royong for interfaith harmony.

Discussion

The *Hajat Sasih* ritual tradition in *Kampung Naga*, Tasikmalaya, serves as a cultural expression embodying deeply rooted values of spirituality, communal cohesion, and ancestral reverence (Koopman, 2023; Sahrul et al., 2024). It illustrates how indigenous belief systems and social structures are maintained and negotiated through ceremonial practice (Rahardjanto et al., 2025a; Sumanto al-Qurtuby & Izak Y.M. Lattu, 2019). This ritual

not only reinforces the cultural identity of the indigenous community but also serves as a vital mechanism for fostering interreligious tolerance (Gede Agung et al., 2024b). Although all residents of *Kampung Naga* embrace Islam, they continue to practice ancestral traditions with deep reverence, reflecting a harmonious acculturation of Islamic teachings and indigenous belief systems (Smith et al., 2024a). Education, both formal and informal, is crucial in transmitting these values to younger generations, ensuring the continuity of the tradition amid modernization.

In *Kampung Naga*, the *Hajat Sasih* tradition continues to be preserved by the local community. Its sustainability is influenced by various interconnected factors (Li et al., 2024). A key factor is the ancestral values that remain highly revered are transmitted across generations, serving as guiding principles in daily life (As'ari et al., 2025b; Brady et al., 2024; Gunara et al., 2022). Additionally, *Kampung Naga*'s relatively remote geographical location helps shield the tradition from external influences (Gocer et al., 2024; Suherman et al., 2023). The community also upholds religious norms with deep sincerity while remaining openness and inclusivity toward external developments. The harmony between spirituality and openness allows the community to live in balance (Caviedes et al., 2024). The primary motivation for preserving the *Hajat Sasih* tradition is the desire to maintain social harmony among its members. For the community, upholding tradition ensures peace and unity in communal life (Delina et al., 2025). Thus, this tradition serves as a cultural safeguard, protecting the community from social fragmentation caused by modernization or interventions that disregard local values.

The preservation of the *Hajat Sasih* tradition significantly influences the social dynamics of *Kampung Naga*'s community, with its intrinsic tolerance empirically demonstrated to simultaneously mitigate potential conflicts and cultivate interfaith mutual respect (Gede Agung et al., 2024b). Therefore, the community is encouraged to adopt a balanced approach to religious practice, encompassing both secular and spiritual dimension, and to recognise its importance in daily lives (Subchi et al., 2022b). Notably, interfaith tolerance has become an integral aspect of Indonesian Islamic tradition, encompassing both religious and cultural dimensions within the Indonesian context (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Zaluchu et al., 2025).

Compared to other indigenous rituals in Indonesia, such as *Bali's Nyepi*, the *Hajat Sasih* tradition similarly embodies values of peace and spiritual reflection (Z. Yani et al., 2025). Both traditions emphasize the importance of inner tranquillity and harmonious relationships among humans, nature, and the social community (Astuti et al., 2020; Danugroho et al., 2025; Fridayanti et al., 2022; Rahardjanto et al., 2025b). Their collective implementation, requiring full societal participation, establishes these traditions as effective mechanisms for reinforcing social bonds (Agung et al., 2024), thereby contributing to social harmony within community life. The parallels between *Hajat Sasih* and *Nyepi* demonstrate that tolerance and local cultural preservation play a strategic role in strengthening intergroup solidarity (A. Sonny Keraf, 2010; Setinawati et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2024b). Thus, the preservation of indigenous traditions across Indonesia is a key element in fostering social stability within multicultural societies.

Given the strategic value of *Hajat Sasih*, more concrete policies are needed to support its preservation. One recommended approach involves integrating local wisdom values-such as tolerance and social harmony-into the educational curriculum of surrounding regions (Sakti et al., 2024; Setinawati et al., 2025; Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1979). Education, in this context, involves recognising the fundamental concepts of Islamic worldview and implementing them in response to emerging challenges. Furthermore, developing community-based tourism that foregrounds *Kampung Naga*'s

cultural values could serve as a dual strategy for heritage preservation and local economic empowerment . Thus, the tradition is not merely preserved as a symbolic artifact but is actively integrated into contemporary community life, ensuring its relevance as both a cultural practice and a lived social reality.

Conclusion

The customary institution and practices of *Kampung Naga* have established a programme that welcomes outsiders, based on principles of tolerance. This endeavour is essential in promoting diversity, characterised by friendliness, politeness, inclusivity, and a willingness to collaborate despite differing beliefs. The view of the *Kampung Naga* community, the culture of tolerance, and the educational transmission of the community's tolerance model represent strategic steps to enhance understanding and interpretation of religion. These efforts are not limited to local residents in remote areas. Given the pressing need for inter-religious tolerance, particularly in *Kampung Naga*, fostering collaboration between the local Customary Institution and the residents is imperative.

To realise the benefits of this effort, activities such as the *Hajat Sasih* tradition are conducted by the *Kampung Naga* community as a form of gratitude for the harvest of crops, respect for nature and ancestors, and expression of tolerance and togetherness. The success of this tolerance model depends on the involvement of traditional institutions, which provide a structured framework for its implementation. The *kuncen*, in this context, serves as a role model, exemplifying the values and practices that underpin the model. The tolerance taught through the *Hajat Sasih* culture is therefore beneficial to all citizens of *Kampung Naga* and, more widely, to Indonesians, fostering a pleasant and inclusive religious and cultural milieu. Mutual respect for cultural diversity cultivates wise and creative attitudes that promote harmony among the people of *Kampung Naga*, who live in a context of multiple cultural, social and religious backgrounds.

Although the findings provide a strong foundation for understanding the tolerance model of *Kampung Naga*, this study has limitations that future research should address. For instance, the data are largely descriptive and focused on local traditions, which may not fully capture modern influences or differing interpretations within younger generations. Further studies should explore how the tolerance model is perceived and adapted across age groups and whether it can be transferred or modified for communities outside *Kampung Naga*. Additionally, comparative analysis with other traditional communities in Indonesia could help identify universal and unique features of local tolerance mechanisms. Employing qualitative and participatory methods would further strengthen findings by providing deeper insights into lived experiences and collective memory related to tolerance practices.

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