

# Intercultural Communication and Religious Harmony at Puja Mandala as an International Tourist Destination: An Islamic Perspective

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Received: 20-08-2024

Accepted: 18-09-2024

Published: 23-10-2024

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## Abstract

The Puja Mandala site represents a historical legacy from the formative period of Indonesia's independence as a sovereign nation characterized by cultural and religious diversity. This diversity inspired the nation's founders to envision Indonesia as a country where people of various ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds could coexist harmoniously in mutual respect and unity. This study aims to explore how intercultural communication and the concept of Tri Kerukunan Umat Beragama (the Threefold Harmony among Religious Communities) function as an "international tourist destination," and how harmony is perceived from an Islamic perspective. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on words and narratives rather than numerical data. Data were collected through interviews, reports, and documents, emphasizing the natural setting of the phenomena to capture their deeper meaning. The findings reveal that since its establishment and development, Puja Mandala has become a symbol of interreligious harmony and the only worship complex in the world that houses five different places of worship within a single area. It has also emerged as a global tourist destination, representing a miniature of religious tolerance in Bali and Indonesia as a whole. Many observers express optimism that Puja Mandala can serve as a model for other regions and as an educational medium for promoting tolerance, harmony, and diversity.

## Keywords

intercultural communication, tri kerukunan umat beragama, harmony in Islamic perspective, international tourist destination, Puja Mandala site.

## Introduction

The establishment of Puja Mandala represents a terminological meaning that connects the connotation of puja as an act of worship offered to God, according to each religion's beliefs and practices.<sup>1</sup> Puja Mandala serves as a worship complex where adherents of different religions perform their respective rituals based on the norms and doctrines of their faiths.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Puja Mandala embodies a historical legacy from the era when Indonesia was affirmed as an independent and sovereign nation characterized by its rich cultural and religious diversity.

However, the noble intentions of religious communities to realize their houses of worship did not necessarily submit to the regulations set by tourism authorities.<sup>3</sup> The realization of a "global village" that is heterogeneous and multicultural—consisting of diverse religions, ethnicities, races, and cultures—encourages interaction, cooperation, accommodation, and acculturation among individuals and social groups. Such heterogeneity in regions with different economic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds can, on the one hand, lead to tensions and even conflicts among these groups.

Sociologically, the Balinese community possesses a cultural uniqueness distinct from other Indonesian societies.<sup>4</sup> The continuous influx of tourists and researchers, along with the growing number of people wishing to reside in Bali, stems from a natural desire to live in comfort, peace, and harmony.<sup>5</sup>

Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, is inhabited not only by diverse indigenous groups varying in ethnicity, race, culture, and religion, but also by foreign visitors who are drawn to the country's natural beauty and cultural richness.<sup>6</sup> The nation's abundant natural resources, diverse traditions, and well-developed tourism facilities have made Indonesia a major global travel destination.<sup>7</sup>

One notable example of a religious site that has evolved into a religious tourism destination over time is Puja Mandala in Bali. This site has transformed from a mere place of worship into a unique tourist attraction. Visitors can engage in spiritual visits while also enjoying shopping activities, supported by the numerous commercial centers surrounding the site.<sup>8</sup>

Although Indonesia has experienced religious, ethnic, and communal conflicts in its history such as those in Poso, Sampit, and Lampung these incidents do not overshadow the broader picture of religious harmony that also characterizes Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> Inter- and intra-religious tensions often stem from ideological differences, yet Indonesia remains a model of coexistence where intercultural and interfaith communication thrives amid diversity.

Such harmony is vividly reflected in Puja Mandala, a religious tourism complex consisting of five different houses of worship Hindu, Catholic, Buddhist, Protestant, and Islamic standing side

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<sup>1</sup> Lenny Kurnia Octaviani and Anggita Putri Marshanda, 'Development of Puja Mandala as a Religious Tourism Attraction in Bali', *Jurnal Manajemen Perhotelan dan Pariwisata*. (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Syarifah Aini, 'Jurnal Dakwah', *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah*. (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Jabaru Ramadhan, Aliffiati, and Ni Made Wiasti, 'Rukun Kifayah Islam (RKI) Masjid Agung Ibnu Batutah Kompleks Puja Mandala Sebagai Ikatan Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Multikultural', *Sunari Penjor : Journal of Anthropology*. (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Darmawan Waruwu and Jaya Pramono, 'Pemanfaatan Kawasan Puja Mandala Sebagai Model Toleransi di Provinsi Bali', *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*. (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Sujaelanto, 'Identifikasi Dewa-Dewa Dalam Reg Weda Mandala I', *Widya Aksara : Jurnal Agama Hindu*. (2020).

<sup>6</sup> I Gede Merta Kusuma, Tuty Maryati, and Ketut Sedana Arta, 'Kerukunan Umat Beragama Di Desa Candikuning, Tabanan, Bali, (Sejarah, Wujud, Nilai-Nilai) Dan Potensinya Sebagai Media Pendidikan Multikultur Di SMA', *Widya Winayata : Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah*. (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Anggun Anindya Sekarningrum, Puji Lestari, and Basuki Agus Suparno, 'Manajemen Konflik Komunikasi Dalam Pengembangan Pariwisata Berbasis Masyarakat', *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*. (2020).

<sup>8</sup> Kurnia Octaviani and Putri Marshanda. *Harmonisasi di Puja Mandala*. (2022).

<sup>9</sup> Al-Sy'ari, Al-ASy'ari, 'Manajemen Konflik Sebuah Solusi (Pandangan Islam)', *Jurnal Komunika Islamika : Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Kajian Islam*. (2021).

by side within a single area. This coexistence exemplifies Indonesia's multicultural politics and the holistic development of the Indonesian people.<sup>10</sup>

Given Indonesia's plural and multicultural nature, research on harmony and interfaith coexistence is crucial not only to support the implementation of Pancasila as the national ideology but also to strengthen national development and promote Indonesia's image abroad.<sup>11</sup> Publishing studies on harmony in heterogeneous regions contributes to nation-building and serves as a reliable reference for foreign tourists in assessing Indonesia's safety and hospitality.

The development of Puja Mandala as a religious tourism destination in a multicultural and heterogeneous area presents an innovative phenomenon worth exploring deeply.<sup>12</sup> This study focuses on the dynamics of intercultural and interreligious communication among five different faiths represented by various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, along with the role of governmental multicultural policy in fostering pluralistic interaction at the site.<sup>13</sup> The coexistence of multiple houses of worship in one complex provides a living experience that fosters coexistence, mutual understanding, and tolerance, serving as both a role model and a practical exercise in interfaith harmony.<sup>14</sup>

Tourism, as one of Indonesia's leading economic sectors, is expected to generate significant foreign exchange and contribute to regional development. It also plays a vital role in job creation, income growth, and improving local welfare while preserving natural, physical, social, and cultural sustainability. The ability of regions like Bali to develop sustainable tourism is key to maintaining harmony between economic progress and cultural coexistence.

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<sup>10</sup> I Ketut Sudarsana, *The Existence of Puja Mandala In Manifesting Tolerance Education*. (2021).

<sup>11</sup> Susanti Sufyadi, *Panduan Pengembangan Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*. (2021).

<sup>12</sup> I Kadek Hendra Dwi Saputra, I Wayan Sujana, and I Gusti Agung Ayu Wulandari, 'Puja Mandala South Kuta Learning Video Media Based on Tolerance for Social Studies Content for Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students', *Jurnal Pendidikan Multikultural Indonesia*. (2023).

<sup>13</sup> Saputra, Sujana, Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama di Puja Manadala, *Jurnal Antropologi Budaya*. (2022).

<sup>14</sup> Ida Selviana Masrurroh dan Mochamad Aris Yusuf, 'Komunikasi Lintas Agama Dalam Mempertahankan Kerukunan Di Rumah Ibadah Puja Mandala Bali', *Mawa Izh Jurnal Dakwah dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan*. (2023).

## Methods

Research Approach and Type This study employs a qualitative approach, as defined by Bogdan and Taylor, as cited by Lexy J. Moleong, who describe qualitative methods as research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observed behaviors.<sup>15</sup> This section represents the epistemological framework through which the researcher seeks to acquire valid knowledge about the research object or reality. Valid knowledge is achieved when there is a correspondence between what is known and the reality being studied – that is, the alignment between knowledge and reality.<sup>16</sup>

From an epistemological standpoint, valid knowledge about a given reality (ontology: the nature of reality) can be obtained through scientific methods. Generally, two dominant paradigms are recognized: quantitative methods, which assume that reality is singular and static, and qualitative methods, which view reality as multiple and dynamic.<sup>17</sup> In this research on Intercultural Communication and the Concept of Puja Mandala in Building Interfaith Harmony: An Analysis of Communication among Religious Adherents in Bali, the researcher applies a qualitative research method to develop an emergent theoretical understanding that serves as an axiological foundation for examining intercultural and interreligious communication within the context of Puja Mandala.

The descriptive qualitative method used in this study relies on verbal or narrative data rather than numerical data derived from interviews, field notes, reports, and documents.<sup>18</sup> It emphasizes the analytical description of phenomena and processes as they naturally occur, allowing for a deep understanding of their essential meanings. primary aim is to study intensively the background, current conditions, and environmental interactions of a particular social unit, whether an individual, group, institution, or community.

In this context, true knowledge is defined as the correspondence between theoretical understanding and the empirical object under study.<sup>19</sup> The “knowledge” refers to the conceptual framework constructed through literature review and theoretical analysis, whereas the “object” refers to the social setting of the research.<sup>20</sup> According to Sugiyono, the social setting represents both the sample and population of the study.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the social situation (sample and population) in this research consists of community leaders and religious representatives at the Puja Mandala complex in Bali, who embody the plural and multicultural dimensions of religious life in the region.

<sup>15</sup> Lexy J. Moleong, ‘Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi)’, *PT. Remaja Rosda Karya*. (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Sugiyono, ‘Sampel Arikunto’, *Hilos Tensados, PT. Remaja Rosda Karya*. (2021).

<sup>17</sup> Kanal Informasi, ‘Home » Referensi » Pengertian Instrumen Penelitian Menurut Para Ahli (Arikunto, Sugiyono, Dkk) Pengertian Instrumen Penelitian Menurut Para Ahli (Arikunto, Sugiyono, Dkk)’, *Pengertian Data Primer dan Data Sekunder*. (2019).

<sup>18</sup> Suharsimi Arikunto, ‘Prosedur Penelitian : Suatu Pendekatan Praktik / Suharsimi Arikunto | OPAC Perpustakaan Nasional RI.’, *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*. Cet. IV. (2022).

<sup>19</sup> Suharsimi Arikunto, ‘Suharsimi Arikunto’, *Suharsimi Arikunto, Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*. Cet. II. (2020).

<sup>20</sup> Lexy J. Moleong, ‘Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi Revisi)’, in *PT. Remaja Rosda Karya*. (2021).

<sup>21</sup> Sugiyono, ‘Pengertian Penelitian Kualitatif Menurut Sugiyono’, *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*. Cet. III. (2022).

## Results and Discussion

### A. Data Presentation and Research Findings

#### 1. The History of Puja Mandala's Establishment

Around the 1990s, the Muslim community in Nusa Dua, Bali faced difficulties performing their religious duties due to the absence of a mosque or prayer hall in the area. At that time, government policy required that the establishment of a house of worship must receive approval from the surrounding community. To resolve this issue, Joop Ave, then Minister of Tourism and Culture, coordinated with the Bali regional government and local community leaders to establish a worship complex where various religions could coexist side by side.<sup>22</sup> Construction of Puja Mandala began in 1994 with support from PT. Bali Tourism Development Center (BTDC), which provided two hectares of land. The first places of worship completed were the Ibnu Batutah Grand Mosque (Islam), Maria Bunda Segala Bangsa Church (Catholic), and the Bukit Doa Protestant Church (Christian). The complex was officially inaugurated in 1997 by the Minister of Religious Affairs at that time, Tarmidzi Taher. Later, Vihara Buddha Guna (Buddhist temple) was completed in 2003, followed by Pura Jagatnatha (Hindu temple) in 2005.<sup>23</sup> A Confucian temple was not included since Confucianism had not yet been officially recognized by the Indonesian government during the initial construction period.

The establishment of Puja Mandala cannot be separated from the humility and tolerance long nurtured by the Hindu community in Bali. This aligns with the teachings of Suhardana, who emphasized that Hindus should cultivate gentleness, hospitality, and kindness, as expressed in the Balinese saying, "Treat all humans as your brothers."<sup>24</sup> Thus, Puja Mandala stands as a miniature of Indonesia's diversity and remains the only religious complex in the world that houses five different places of worship in one location, embodying mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

#### 2. The Balinese Model of Tolerance

The term tolerance originates from the Latin word *tolerare*, meaning to endure, to be patient, and to respect differences in opinion, belief, or religion.<sup>25</sup> According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), tolerance is the attitude of allowing and respecting others' beliefs, customs, and opinions that differ from one's own.<sup>26</sup> Puja Mandala exemplifies the Balinese model of tolerance a unique form of harmony not only in Indonesia but also globally. In this community, people do not emphasize the dichotomy between majority and minority groups. Instead, Balinese society ensures freedom for everyone to practice their religion, grounded in values of mutual respect. This means that even while honoring the predominant Hindu culture as a local wisdom, all religions are equally

<sup>22</sup> Ida Bagus Wika Krishna, 'Kajian Multikulturalisme: Ide-Ide Imajiner Dalam Pembangunan Puja Mandala', *Jurnal Genta Hredaya*. (2019).

<sup>23</sup> Ida Bagus Putu Puja and Putu Ayu Aryasih, 'TOURISM AND COMMUNITY. A STUDY OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN MANDALA WISATA WANARA WANA UBUD', *Journal of Business on Hospitality and Tourism*. (2020).

<sup>24</sup> I Ketut Sudarsana and others, 'The Existence Of Puja Mandala In Manifesting Tolerance Education'. (2019).

<sup>25</sup> Leonardo Haloho, I Ketut Ardhana, dan Fransiska Dewi Setiowati Sunaryo, 'Puja Mandala: Kebhinekaan Dan Keharmonisan Umat Beragama Di Bali 1994-2017', *Humanis*. (2019).

<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Nur Prabowo Setyabudi, 'PENGUATAN TOLERANSI BAGI PEMAJUAN BUDAYA KEAGAMAAN: STUDI ATAS PRAKTIK TOLERANSI AGAMA DI PUJA MANDALA BALI', *Harmoni*. (2020).

respected.<sup>27</sup>

Each religion upholds moral teachings that guide the behavior of its adherents. No religion advocates harm or violence; all seek peace and compassion.<sup>28</sup> The Balinese community's tolerance reflects Indonesia's ancestral heritage of cultural wisdom and diversity. Interviews with worshippers and local residents around Puja Mandala reveal that no interreligious conflicts have occurred.<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, the complex has become a model of social cohesion, strengthening interreligious and communal relations through shared security and religious activities.

Both the government and Balinese society play crucial roles in sustaining interreligious harmony. The government's strategic policymaking helps maintain stability and mutual respect among citizens, whereas poor governance in other regions often correlates with prolonged conflict.

### 3. The Tri Hita Karana Philosophy as a Foundation of Tolerance

The majority Hindu population in Bali adheres to the Tri Hita Karana philosophy a life principle emphasizing harmony with God (parhyangan), harmony among humans (pawongan), and harmony with nature (palemahan). These three dimensions of balance form the moral and spiritual foundation of Balinese life and continue to shape the island's social fabric today.<sup>30</sup> Even though Hinduism is the dominant religion, the Balinese demonstrate openness toward people of other faiths, ethnicities, and cultures. The existence of Puja Mandala exemplifies this inclusivity. The majority is not perceived as superior but rather as a protector of minorities, ensuring equal opportunities for all, including the construction of diverse houses of worship.

Each place of worship within Puja Mandala incorporates Balinese architectural aesthetics blended with its respective religious symbolism, producing a distinctive fusion of culture and faith. This integration of local wisdom into art and architecture represents harmony between spirituality and cultural identity. Consequently, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy continues to reinforce communal tolerance and inspire the global pursuit of peace and harmony among humankind.<sup>31</sup>

### 4. Puja Mandala as a Family Metaphor

Puja Mandala can be likened to a family, where members possess different characters yet remain united within one household. Despite differences in faith and practice, each religious community maintains strong ties of respect and cooperation.<sup>32</sup> The existence of Puja Mandala provides a living example of interreligious harmony, both for Balinese

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<sup>27</sup> Anton. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>28</sup> Dermawan Waruwu, 'Vidya Samhita Jurnal Penelitian Agama, III (1) 2017 KAWASAN PUJA MANDALA WUJUD KEARIFAN LOKAL DAN DESTINASI WISATA SPIRITUAL DALAM PENGEMBANGAN MODEL TOLERANSI DI INDONESIA', *Penelitian Agama*. (2021).

<sup>29</sup> I Kadek Hendra Dwi Saputra, I Wayan Sujana, I Gusti Agung Ayu Wulandari, 'Puja Mandala South Kuta Learning Video Media Based on Tolerance for Social Studies Content for Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students', *Jurnal Pendidikan Multikultural Indonesia*. (2023).

<sup>30</sup> Muhamad Fajar Pramono dan Farissa Azmia Hud, 'Puja Mandala in Benoa, Badung, Bali as the Model of Religious Tolerance', *Journal of Comparative Study of Religions*. (2021).

<sup>31</sup> IKHD Saputra, I W Sujana, 'Media Video Pembelajaran Puja Mandala Kuta Selatan Berbasis Toleransi Muatan IPS Siswa Kelas IV Sekolah Dasar', ... *Multikultural Indonesia*. (2023).

<sup>32</sup> Jabaru Ramadhan, Aliffiati, dan Ni Made Wiasti, 'Rukun Kifayah Islam (RKI) Masjid Agung Ibnu Batutah Kompleks Puja Mandala Sebagai Ikatan Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Multikultural', *Sunari Penjor : Journal of Anthropology*. (2022).

society and for Indonesia as a whole.<sup>33</sup>

During Friday prayers, for instance, the church bell rather than the mosque's drum (bedug) is sounded simultaneously, as the Catholic community observes the Angelus prayer at the same hour. On occasions when Nyepi (the Hindu day of silence) coincides with Friday prayers, mutual respect prevails. Hindus refrain from activities as part of the Catur Brata Penyepeian (the four restrictions: no fire, no work, no travel, no entertainment), yet they allow Muslims to pray quietly without loudspeakers. The pecalang (traditional Balinese security officers) ensure safety so that Muslims can worship peacefully.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, during Easter celebrations, Christian and Catholic congregations are assisted by local security and even mosque committees, who help regulate traffic. Conversely, during Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist holidays, Christians and Catholics reciprocate by maintaining order and security. Regular interfaith meetings among religious leaders are held to sustain communication and coordination.<sup>35</sup>

This practice aligns with Muslih's mediation theory, which identifies four models settlement, facilitative, transformative, and normative mediation and Kahane's concept that complex problems can only be peacefully resolved when those involved collaborate creatively to understand and improve their shared situations. Puja Mandala thus serves as a living mediation model of peace and dialogue.

##### 5. Puja Mandala as a Religious Tourism Destination

Over the years, Puja Mandala has become a miniature of interreligious tolerance, attracting religious leaders and government delegations from across Indonesia and abroad. In 2020, a delegation from the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) of South Kalimantan conducted a comparative study with the FKUB of Bali. In 2022, participants of the Parliamentary Event on Interfaith Dialogue from 17 countries recognized Puja Mandala as a global model of religious harmony worthy of emulation.

Puja Mandala functions not only as a manifestation of interreligious tolerance in Bali but also as a significant religious tourism attraction for domestic and international visitors.<sup>36</sup> It offers a strategic model for reducing interreligious conflict and strengthening social resilience through tolerance and dialogue. Communities that embrace tolerance are better equipped to manage social, economic, and political challenges.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, the values of tolerance must be continuously cultivated throughout Indonesia to prepare society for evolving pluralism and multicultural realities. Pluralism, understood as both an idea and a social consciousness, emphasizes coexistence, mutual respect, and the pursuit of peace and prosperity.<sup>38</sup>

Geographically, Puja Mandala lies along the main route to several major tourist

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<sup>33</sup> Anton. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>35</sup> Kristian. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>36</sup> jaelanto, 'IDENTIFIKASI DEWA-DEWA DALAM REG WEDA MANDALA I', *Widya Aksara : Jurnal Agama Hindu*. (2020).

<sup>37</sup> Ida Bagus Putu Puja and Putu Ayu Aryasih, 'TOURISM AND COMMUNITY. A STUDY OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN MANDALA WISATA WANARA WANA UBUD', *Journal of Business on Hospitality and Tourism*. (2020).

<sup>38</sup> I Gusti Agung Ngurah Anglaya dan I Wayan Damayana, 'Persepsi Warga Hindu Desa Adat Bualu Terhadap Pura Jagatnatha Puja Mandala Kuta Selatan, Badung, Bali', *Jurnal Psikologi Mandala*. (2019).

destinations—Nusa Dua, Uluwatu, Garuda Wisnu Kencana, and Dreamland—making it an accessible stop for travelers. Many visitors pause to pray, meditate, or simply admire the architectural harmony and spiritual tranquility of the site. Nearly all tourists express deep admiration for the religious coexistence and cultural harmony that distinguish Bali as an island of peace.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Interreligious Communication in Puja Mandala

The establishment of Puja Mandala as a facility for people to practice their respective religions has successfully fulfilled its foundational vision. The worship sites within this complex have become sacred spaces where adherents of various faiths conduct their rituals. Nearby hotels in Nusa Dua inform their guests that religious facilities are located within walking distance. Visitors in need of worship spaces are directed to Puja Mandala. Likewise, residents and workers in the surrounding areas find it convenient to perform their religious duties due to the proximity of the mosque, church, temple, and vihara each serving as a house of worship for different religious communities. On ordinary days, only a few people come to pray.

So far, harmony has been maintained through close cooperation between the religious leaders and congregations worshipping there. Mutual respect and assistance have become the foundation for sustaining peace and cohesion. For instance, Hindu pekalang (traditional security officers) help ensure safety during Christian Easter celebrations, while the mosque's security personnel provide support. Conversely, on Fridays when Muslims perform congregational prayers, Christian congregants help manage the parking area.<sup>39</sup> Close communication among the leaders of the religious institutions within Puja Mandala has been a key element in sustaining interfaith harmony.<sup>40</sup>

Meetings among the interfaith association members are held irregularly depending on circumstances—sometimes once every two or three months either at local cafés or alternately within different worship sites. Whenever interreligious tensions occur elsewhere, even outside Bali or abroad, the association immediately convenes to ensure that such conflicts do not spread to the Benoa area. According to Solo, a representative of the interfaith association, all members remain firmly committed to preserving unity and harmony.

### 2. The Concept of “Tri Kerukunan Umat Beragama” (Three Pillars of Religious Harmony)

The vision behind the construction of Puja Mandala has largely been realized. The establishment of Pura Jagatnatha within the complex and the active participation of local communities such as the pekalang who help maintain order and peace during religious and social events stand as tangible evidence of this achievement.<sup>41</sup> Puja Mandala has become a model of interreligious coexistence in Indonesia, inspiring similar worship complexes to be developed in other regions.

Comparable initiatives include Taman Mini Indonesia Indah in Jakarta and Bukit Kasih in Minahasa, where houses of worship from various religions coexist within a single compound. Bukit Kasih, known for its scenic beauty, has also emerged as a symbol

<sup>39</sup> Margaret. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>40</sup> Ida Bagus. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>41</sup> Darma Putra. 2024. Wawancara.

of tolerant pluralism where spiritual diversity itself becomes a form of aesthetic and cultural attraction.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Puja Mandala as a Social Portrait of Harmonious Religious Life

Referring to Nasikun's theoretical framework, the interreligious coexistence at Puja Mandala reflects two dialectical patterns of social harmony: first, cross-cutting affiliations, which describe overlapping social relationships among religious communities, and second, cross-cutting loyalties, which highlight the shared sense of belonging and responsibility among members of different groups.

Derogatory labels such as kafir (infidel) in Islam, lost sheep in Christianity, maitrah in Hinduism, or abrahmacariyavasa in Buddhism have no place in this environment, as each religion is recognized as possessing its own sacred truth upheld by its followers.<sup>43</sup> This mutual acknowledgment has fostered a symbiotic relationship that underpins the spirit of tolerance flourishing within Puja Mandala.

### 4. Puja Mandala as an "International Tourist Destination"

The local economy surrounding Puja Mandala has benefited greatly from the influx of visitors, leading to the growth of various goods and service industries. Residents sell paintings, religious souvenirs, food, and devotional items such as statues, rosaries, robes, turbans, and perfumes. Services such as ojek (motor taxis), pedicabs, and public transport also thrive due to tourism.

Moreover, the community experiences a sense of peace and pride during annual or monthly events, including educational visits where students learn about religious tolerance. Weekly activities especially on Fridays and Sundays keep the complex lively. This culture of pilgrimage and visitation has evolved into a distinctive social tradition that combines spiritual reverence with local creativity, turning Puja Mandala into a cultural hub and economic driver.

Over time, religious visits that once centered on sacred veneration have become intertwined with social and economic practices. Just as pilgrims travel to the tombs of saints across Indonesia seeking blessings (ngalap berkah), visitors to Puja Mandala engage in similar rituals that simultaneously sustain local livelihoods. Thus, the sacred and the commercial coexist symbiotically, reflecting a commodification of spirituality without diminishing its sacredness.

The emergence of Puja Mandala as a sacred yet economically active space demonstrates how religion and tourism intersect within a cultural framework that emphasizes tolerance, coexistence, and shared prosperity.

### 5. Religious Tourism

Puja Mandala exemplifies institutionalized religious tourism an integration of faith and modern organizational management.<sup>44</sup> While religious tourism does not aim to establish new belief systems, it transforms spirituality into a consumable cultural product where religious experiences gain economic value.

In this context, religion and market forces are closely intertwined. The religious

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<sup>42</sup> Darma Putra. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>43</sup> Ida Bagus. 2024. Wawancara.

<sup>44</sup> Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti, 'A Antropologia Inquieta de Victor Turner', *GIS - Gesto, Imagem e Som - Revista de Antropologia*. (2023).

rituals, symbols, and artifacts offered within Puja Mandala's surroundings reveal how faith-based practices adapt to capitalist structures. Visitors purchase devotional goods, participate in ceremonies, and contribute to the local economy, turning spirituality into a multidimensional process of cultural exchange and economic opportunity.

As Pattana Kitiarsa observed in his studies on Balinese Hindu rituals, the market's influence on religion does not necessarily lead to secularization. Instead, it can strengthen religious vitality by expanding participation and visibility. Similarly, at Puja Mandala, commerce and devotion reinforce each other. Vendors selling offerings and souvenirs coexist with worshippers, illustrating how religion becomes embedded in everyday economic practices.

This phenomenon highlights that religious tourism represents not only a transformation of spiritual values into market values but also an adaptive response to modernity, capitalism, and materialism. The social impacts include the emergence of new entrepreneurial competition, pragmatic lifestyles, and collective solidarity among the local population united by a shared sense of responsibility to maintain Puja Mandala as a symbol of peace and harmony.

#### 6. Harmony in the Perspective of Islam

Visiting places of worship has long been a cherished aspect of Indonesian culture, maintained across generations.<sup>45</sup> Despite modern transformations, the spiritual tradition of pilgrimage to sacred sites remains strong.<sup>46</sup> The reverence for Puja Mandala stems from its moral and spiritual symbolism, which embodies leadership, education, and ethical guidance. The charisma of religious figures and the sanctity of the site inspire collective devotion.

In this regard, houses of worship function not only as ritual spaces but also as media for spreading messages of peace and overcoming egoistic tendencies that hinder interfaith understanding. Religious leaders across traditions continuously urge their followers to practice faith in alignment with divine revelation (*ulūhiyyah*) and prophetic teachings (*nubuwwah*), while avoiding exclusivist truth claims and denigration of other faiths.

In the broader human context (*basyariyyah*), acknowledging the shared sacredness of all religions and fostering a sense of collective belonging constitutes the foundation of genuine tolerance (*hanīfiyyatu as-samhah*). When believers recognize the necessity of mutual respect and responsibility for maintaining peace, interfaith coexistence becomes a moral imperative.

Therefore, Puja Mandala stands as a living embodiment of the principles enshrined in Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), and the spirit of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The complex not only attracts visitors but also serves as a national model for building interfaith harmony. Government authorities, religious leaders, and the broader community must continue to nurture this spirit of tolerance to ensure that future generations inherit a legacy of peace and unity.

<sup>45</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*. (2020).

<sup>46</sup> Pattana Kitiarsa, *Religious Commodifications in Asia*, *Religious Commodifications in Asia*. (2021).

## Conclusion

The harmony and interreligious cohesion that have flourished within the Puja Mandala complex are deeply felt by all members of the surrounding community. As long as people continue to respect the diversity of beliefs and traditions in their environment, peace and social harmony can be effectively sustained. The spirit of mutual tolerance among religious communities within Puja Mandala demonstrates that the freedom to practice one's faith is a fundamental human right inherent to all individuals.

Over the years, Puja Mandala has evolved beyond its initial religious function to become an international tourist destination visited by both domestic and foreign travelers. Strategically located along the main route to major attractions such as Nusa Dua, Uluwatu, Garuda Wisnu Kencana, and Dreamland, the complex attracts visitors who often stop to pray or simply admire its architectural and cultural uniqueness. Many tourists express deep admiration for the peaceful coexistence and interreligious harmony that Bali has long exemplified.

From an Islamic perspective, Puja Mandala embodies the universal values of tolerance, harmony, and respect for difference. Within the context of this study, the Islamic viewpoint provides a moral and theological framework to interpret the interfaith communication and cultural coexistence practiced at Puja Mandala. The development of such a destination must also adhere to sharia-based principles, emphasizing ethical tourism, social responsibility, and respect for religious values as integral components of sustainable cultural heritage.

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