



## RELIGIOUS MODERATION: TOLERANCE VALUES IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING IN THE MUARO JAMBI TEMPLE COMPLEX

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of religious moderation through tolerance values in Islamic Religious Education within the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study analyzes how tolerance is practiced and interpreted by the local Muslim community, traditional leaders, and educators. The data were examined to identify patterns and relationships that reflect the integration of religious principles with the social and cultural context of the site. The findings reveal that tolerance is demonstrated through the community's ability to maintain strong religious commitment while simultaneously respecting and preserving the cultural and historical heritage. 1) The temple environment is used as a *living laboratory* for learning, where teachers of Annisa Kindergarten and Itihadul Khoiriyah MTs integrate wasathiyah values through a contextual, historical, and experiential learning pedagogical approach that provides opportunities for students to understand cultural diversity; practice tolerance, and avoid extreme judgments of differences. 2) The community remains steadfast in the value of monotheism while interpreting the existence of historical sites as part of a cultural identity that needs to be maintained, so that their religious practices are inclusive, balanced, and harmonious, in line with the paradigm of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin; 3) Socio-religious life, worship activities, and educational activities take place side by side with the flow of cultural tourism without conflict, indicating a strong internalization of religious moderation at the practical level.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with many different religions and cultures, united by the Pancasila ideology and the national principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). Consequently, exclusivism is a major cause of religious conflict in Indonesia (Prasojo & Pabbajah, 2020). This is based on intergroup interests, such as the 1999 Muslim-Christian conflict in North Maluku (Tursinawati et al., 2022). A narrow understanding of religion among the public can diminish its purpose of realizing *rahmatan lil a'lamin* (blessing for all beings). Every member of society must learn that religious belief is not coercive.

Religious harmony does not just emerge, but is formed through the awareness of each member of society. A moderate attitude is also necessary to maintain unity and preserve the integrity of diversity within society. To achieve interfaith harmony, a universal societal understanding of human rights in determining one's religion is necessary. Choosing a religion is an individual right; there is no compulsion in choosing one's religion. Therefore, religious moderation in Indonesia requires further in-depth study, as Indonesian society encompasses a diverse range of cultures and religions that must be mutually respected.

Religious moderation has existed in Indonesia since the 7th century AD. Two different religions can coexist peacefully. Jambi province, specifically, has a Buddhist temple complex that remains active as a place of worship. While Jambi is known for its Malay-Muslim culture, religious moderation has been practiced for the past 1,500 years. This is evidenced by a quote from Elizabeth D. Inandiak's book, "Islam and Buddhism grew together with love and compassion." This demonstrates that interfaith relations, or what we commonly know as religious moderation, have existed since the Srivijaya era. The Muaro Jambi temple is a legacy of the Srivijaya kingdom.

Character education in religious moderation is taught in society and in the classroom. The Muaro Jambi temple site was a center of religious moderation and education in Southeast Asia in the 15th century. The largest temple complex in Southeast Asia, many of its buildings remain buried beneath the waters of the Batang Hari River, the longest river on the island of Sumatra. Furthermore, according to Elizabeth D. Inandiak's book, they studied medicine, literature, and art.

From several explanations regarding religious moderation that have developed, it is certainly very necessary to preserve both in Jambi province and in Indonesia to create harmony between religious communities. Religious moderation is not new but has existed since the kingdom era where at that time they could live in harmony and side by side. Therefore, the formulation of the problem from several studies on religious moderation by exploring the history of Buddhist and Islamic civilization in the Muaro Jambi temple complex. By looking at how the values of tolerance in Islamic Religious Education learning at the Muaro Jambi temple complex site.

Religious moderation in Islamic education is a value concept inherent in a moderate understanding of Islam and must be integrated with the educational goals of moderate Islamic education. Moderation is a middle-ground ideology, not too far from radical ideologies. Islamic education enables us to provide a sound understanding of Islam and its values, including those that emphasize the importance of tolerance, justice, and compassion for others. Furthermore, Islamic

education can also teach openness and religious diversity so that society understands and embraces differences in religion and belief (Sudarta, 2022).

The values of multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia represent religious moderation and tolerance. Islam considers religious pluralism as something that exists in nature (sunnatullah). Humanist education can shape Islamic religious understanding and attitudes that emphasize the importance of peace and unity in national life, while peace education can shape Islamic religious understanding and attitudes that uphold humanitarian values. The value of wasatiyah education towards local culture shapes moderate Islamic religious understanding and attitudes as long as they do not conflict with Islamic principles (Islamy, 2022).

## METHOD

Qualitative research methodology is not a new approach because it has been used for a long time. He also calls it an interpretive technique because his theory distinguishes quantitative and qualitative approaches, a postpositivistic approach because it comes from postpositivistic philosophy, and an artistic approach because he compares the research process to painting (Sugiyono; 2013). Nature and quality are usually the main focus of qualitative research. The main goal is to find meaning, understanding, concepts, characters, sticks, symptoms, symbols, and descriptions of events using various approaches and objectives.

Therefore, religious leaders, community leaders, and traditional institutions are the main targets of observation and informants for collecting the data. This study aims to determine its value for Islamic religious teaching at the Muaro temple complex in Jambi (Sugiyono; 2013). This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which means researchers find knowledge or theories about the research over a certain period of time. (Samsu, 2017). This study also uses observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at the Muaro Jambi Temple site. Researchers must collect data, but basic research tools must complement and differentiate the information collected through interviews and observations after the research subjects are determined (Sugiyono; 2013).

Data analysis helps researchers think critically about qualitative research and helps them understand the concepts and relationships within the research data so they can formulate and evaluate hypotheses. According to Miles and Huberman's model, data analysis includes the processes of collecting, reducing, presenting, drawing conclusions, and verifying (Sugiyono, 2013). As stated in this study, descriptive qualitative data analysis—meaning describing in words—was used. This was done to provide an overview of the phenomena and research findings through data categorization and the use of common language.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Values of Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education at the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex Site

The relevance of religious moderation to Islamic Religious Education arises from the urgency of developing a balanced and tolerant religious understanding amidst the challenges of social plurality, as education plays a strategic role in instilling *wasathiyah values* in the younger generation. (Arifin & Huda, 2024) In the context of Islamic Religious Education, religious moderation is crucial because it is not only a matter of teaching doctrine, but also the internalization of tolerant, egalitarian, and inclusive character. Furthermore, the national-level policy of religious moderation reinforces this relevance, as moderation has become part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' mission to suppress radicalism through education. (Faruq & Noviani, 2021) When Islamic Religious Education implements moderation, educators can design a curriculum that not only emphasizes rituals of understanding but also teaches the values of deliberation, tolerance, and mutual respect aspects identified in research on madrasah curricula related to moderation (Maharani & Rahmariar, 2023).

Religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education also has epistemological relevance, because through a moderate approach to Qur'anic interpretation, students are invited to understand verses that contain balance (*tawazun*), openness, and empathy (Hanafi et al., 2022) In the pedagogical realm, the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education learning has proven effective in forming a tolerant attitude in students (Jannah et al., 2024) *Wasathiyah (moderate)* values can also be cultivated through madrasa education by emulating classical Islamic figures who harmonize the values of innovation, balance, and reform in religious thought (Fauzian et al., 2021).

Policy-wise, religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education is relevant because it is part of the state's strategy to maintain harmony and prevent extremism in schools. Moderation policies demand the integration of moderate values into education (Mukhibat et al., 2023). In daily practice, Islamic Religious Education teachers play a crucial role as agents of moderation because they not only teach religion but also instill the values of tolerance and dialogue across differences. Madrasah teachers have varying understandings of moderation but have the potential to strengthen harmony (Chadidjah et al., 2021). The relevance of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education becomes even more evident when the curriculum is designed to include content that encourages students to think critically and reflectively about religious texts, rather than simply memorizing or dogmatically (Zahroh, 2022).

In terms of learning methodology, religious moderation can be implemented through a dialogical and contextual approach, where Islamic Religious Education teachers relate religious material to contemporary social issues and local diversity, instilling that moderate religion does not mean embodying beliefs but rather strengthening empathy and cooperation. This is highly relevant in a pluralistic society like Indonesia, as moderation allows students to appreciate cultural diversity and religious backgrounds without feeling threatened by their identities. Moderation is also crucial in avoiding religious polarization; when religious understanding is built within a

wasathiyah framework, students are not only taught to affirm their beliefs but also to maintain good relationships with those with differing views.

The relevance of moderation in Islamic Religious Education has become even more strategic in the digital era, where extremism can spread rapidly through social media. Moderate religious education can serve as a bulwark against radicalism through critical religious literacy and digital morality. Moderate Islamic education incorporates character elements such as tolerance and social awareness to prevent the younger generation from being easily influenced by radical ideologies (Habibie et al., 2021). In terms of social integration, religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education encourages the formation of an inclusive school community, where students from diverse backgrounds can engage in dialogue and collaborate in religious and social activities.

Furthermore, religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education is also relevant for shaping future leadership that prioritizes the values of balance, justice, and deliberation, as students educated with wasathiyah values tend to make decisions that consider multiple aspects and respect diversity. In a global context, moderate values in Islamic education are crucial for addressing the challenges of transnational intolerance and interfaith conflict. This relevance aligns with the government's policy perspective that moderation in diversity is not merely a local matter, but part of value diplomacy and social stability.

Furthermore, religious moderation strengthens the legitimacy of formal Islamic education because it allows Islamic institutions (schools and madrasas) to adapt to the values of democracy, human rights, and plurality without losing their theological identity. The implementation of moderation demonstrates that Islam in schools can be a force for building national character, not merely a mere ritual teaching. In the long term, the relevance of moderation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also lies in its contribution to producing a generation of Muslim intellectuals and social workers who not only understand their religion but are also capable of providing solutions to religious-based social conflicts.

Theoretically, religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education presents a *wasathiyah paradigm* that unites classical Islamic teachings with contemporary needs, as demonstrated by the analysis of modern and classical interpretations in religious education (Putri & Fadlullah, 2022). This *wasathiyah* concept helps students understand that Islam is a dynamic religion, not a statistical one, so they can reinterpret religious texts according to the context of the times without deviating from the main principles. Thus, the relevance of moderation in Islamic Religious Education is not merely a moral addition, but an intrinsic part of Islamic education that has a long-term goal, building a responsible, open religious awareness, and remains directed to the main source.

Religious moderation also strengthens the character of education because values such as balance, deliberation, tolerance, and justice can be internalized by students through religious learning and extracurricular activities, creating a student profile that is not only religious, but also social. The presence of moderation provides an ethical framework for Islamic education to respond to the challenges of violence in the name of religion, discrimination, and intolerance, so that Islamic Religious Education is not only a place for ritual lectures, but becomes a forum for the formation of peaceful and inclusive citizens. In national ecological education, religious moderation

helps bridge the gap between the religious and social goals of the state, instilling that Islamic teachings have great potential as a unifying force in diversity.

Furthermore, moderate religious education provides direction for the development of research in Islamic Religious Education, as this topic serves as a bridge between Islamic studies and contemporary social sciences (sociology, psychology, and education), encouraging interdisciplinary research. Developing *wasathiyah values* in madrasas through a historical and pedagogical approach can serve as a sustainable model for moderate education (Saihu, 2021). From a policy perspective, this urges policymakers in Islamic education to allocate resources (teacher training, open materials, and community engagement) to manage moderation as a long-term social investment.

The relevance of religious moderation is also evident in the context of local cultural transformation and strengthening the identity of the peaceful Muaro Jambi community. Through moderate education, students can internalize that Islamic values do not conflict with local cultural values such as deliberation, tolerance, and solidarity. Moderate-oriented Islamic education contributes to maintaining social harmony at the community level, particularly in areas that were once centers of civilization or culture, while also instilling a sense of responsibility for cultural heritage. Moderate values also provide a normative foundation for dialogue between religious and non-religious communities, as moderate Islamic education teaches that differences are part of God's creation.

Ultimately, the relevance of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education is also highly pragmatic: the presence of *wasathiyah values* in education helps prevent sectarian conflict, minimizes exclusive narratives, and encourages constructive religious learning that contributes to national peace. Moderate Islamic education is not merely an academic ideal, but a concrete response to the fight against radicalism and intolerance in the contemporary era, as supported by current educational policies and academic research (Habibie et al., 2021). Therefore, the relevance of diverse moderation in Islamic Religious Education is fundamental and strategic for socio-religious development in the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex.

Research conducted at the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex site indicates that community leaders view religious moderation as highly relevant and important in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the site. The following description is based on in-depth interviews with several community leaders and direct observations of activities taking place at the temple complex. Mr. Syarnaidi, a traditional leader of Muaro Jambi Village, stated:

"Iko Temple has been a place of study for Buddhism since the Bengen era. After the arrival of Islam, all the people in Siko were Muslim, and we continued to live in harmony with other religions. We even enjoyed the many activities in Siko, both religious and other. The people of Siko demonstrated that Islam can coexist with other histories and cultures. So, if an Islamic campus or religious school came to study in Siko, it would be a great fit" (Interview, 2025).

This statement illustrates the assumption that Islamic religious education will be strengthened if it fosters openness to historical and cultural diversity. Muaro Jambi Temple has

served as a center for Buddhist learning since ancient times. After the arrival of Islam, the entire community in the Muaro Jambi Temple area embraced Islam, yet continued to live in harmony with adherents of other faiths. The community also expressed joy when the area hosted various activities, both religious and social. This demonstrates the local community's belief that Islam can coexist harmoniously with local history and culture. Therefore, the presence of Islamic universities or religious educational institutions conducting learning activities in this area is considered highly appropriate and relevant.



**Figure 1.** Entrance Gate to Muaro Jambi Village, Muaro Jambi Temple Complex

Observations conducted in the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex area indicate that the site's surroundings serve not only as a national cultural heritage site but also as a vibrant community living space with active social, educational, and religious dynamics. The presence of Islamic educational institutions, such as Early Childhood Education, Annisa Kindergarten, and Itihadul Khoiriyah Islamic Junior High School (MTs), demonstrates that the historic site has become an integral part of the community's daily religious and educational life.

Early Childhood Education, Annisa Kindergarten which is in Jl. Candi Gumpung, Muaro Jambi Village, the residential area around the temple is simple yet well-organized. Learning activities take place from morning to afternoon. Observations show that children engage in activities such as reciting the Iqra' (Quranic Religious Education), reciting daily prayers, practicing prayer, and engaging in educational play. Interview with one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers, Mr. M. Rohimin, M.Pd. information was obtained that:

"We find the peaceful environment helpful. Even though it's close to the temple complex, we've never encountered any problems. In fact, we often take the children to learn about local history so they understand that cultural differences exist and should be respected."

In an interview with an Islamic Religious Education teacher at an Islamic educational institution near the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, the informant stated that the presence of the historic site never posed a barrier to educational activities. On the contrary, the relatively quiet environment was considered to provide positive support for the teaching and learning process. The informant explained that although the school is located not far from the temple area, there were no significant disruptions to either security or learning comfort. In fact, teachers utilize the proximity of the historical site as part of their learning media. Teachers often invite students to learn about local history in the temple area. This step is taken to ensure students understand that cultural diversity has existed since ancient times and is an important part of the local community's identity.



**Figure 2.** Early Childhood Education Building, Annisa Kindergarten

In addition to Annisa Kindergarten Early Childhood Education, MTs Itihadul Khoiriya Located not far from the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, the site appears to be active with regular learning activities. Students are seen attending lessons in class, and several small groups are seen reviewing Quran memorization in the schoolyard. Teachers are also seen utilizing the surrounding environment for extracurricular activities, including introducing local history. An interview with a PAI teacher, *Mr. M. Rohimin, M.Pd.*, who lives near the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, revealed that the site's presence has a positive influence on the learning process. The informant stated that the temple area is not only a historical object, but also serves as a source of educational value that can foster an understanding of cultural diversity in students. The informant explained that the environment of the historic site provides a unique nuance to the educational process. He said that:

"The temple environment adds color to our education. Students can learn about religion, but we also take them through history. Here, they learn to appreciate the legacy of the past and not easily judge anything as contrary to Islamic teachings." (Interview, 2025).

This statement indicates that teachers utilize the school's proximity to the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex as a medium to integrate Islamic religious learning with an understanding of local history and culture. Direct experience with relics of the past helps students understand religious moderation, namely by not immediately viewing religious and cultural differences as

threats to religious beliefs. This finding aligns with the principle of religious moderation, which encourages students to appreciate cultural heritage, understand diversity, and prioritize a wise attitude in assessing differences. The temple environment serves as an educational tool that allows students to learn that Islam can coexist with culture and historical heritage, as emphasized by informants in the interviews.

Observations at MTs Itihadul Khoiriyah show that educators at the school actively utilize the Muaro Jambi Temple area as *a living laboratory* for learning. This approach is evident in students' direct involvement in exploring historical sites, enabling them to learn the values of character and tolerance contextually (Observation 2025). The use of temple sites as learning resources also aligns with the *experiential learning framework*, where students learn through real-life experiences that are then reflected upon and internalized. Experiential learning has proven to be an effective method for shaping student character. Field experience-based learning has a significant impact on students' ability to understand the values of tolerance and diversity (Rosidin, 2017). This reinforces that these observations are not merely local phenomena, but part of a relevant pedagogical trend in modern education.

The local history introduction activities carried out by teachers at MTs Itihadul Khoiriyah are an important practice in connecting students with their surrounding context. Local history learning focuses not only on factual knowledge but also on fostering cultural awareness and the ability to appreciate the heritage of civilization. The integration of local history into learning activities enhances students' ability to understand the relationship between religion, culture, and social identity in a more inclusive manner (Wibowo & Nurjanah, 2021). Therefore, these teacher practices align with academic findings.

These observational findings were further reinforced by interviews with teachers, who confirmed that the integration of Islamic values and local cultural values was consistently applied in daily learning. This pedagogical approach reflects the local wisdom-based educational model increasingly emphasized in contemporary Islamic education studies (Observation, 2025). Integrating Islamic values with local culture is an important strategy for fostering religious moderation and preventing students from developing exclusive religious attitudes (Supriyandi et al., 2024). The consistent implementation at MTs Itihadul Khoiriyah demonstrates the success of this practice in a real-world context.

Furthermore, local wisdom-based education is relevant in shaping students' character in Indonesia's era of cultural diversity. Learning that combines local and Islamic values can strengthen tolerance, empathy, and the ability to interact in a multicultural environment (Suarnaya, 2021). Thus, the use of the Muaro Jambi Temple site as a learning space serves as an educational tool that aligns with the goals of national character education. Overall, the observations and interviews illustrate integrated and progressive educational practices. Educators not only convey religious knowledge normatively but also connect it to the local cultural and historical context so that Islamic values can be understood in a more inclusive and applicable way. By utilizing a living laboratory based on cultural sites, MTs Itihadul Khoiriyah has implemented a character education model that aligns with the latest scientific literature, particularly in efforts to strengthen religious

moderation as part of strengthening the image of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (*Observation*, 2025).

Thus, this interview confirms that the community and educators around the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex view religious moderation as relevant and applicable. The temple site is not only a historical heritage but also an educational space that contributes to the formation of inclusive and balanced religious attitudes.



**Figure 3.** MTs Itihadul Khoiriya, Muaro Jambi Village

Observations revealed that the activities of the community, students, and educators coexist with the temple's presence as a cultural site. There was no apparent rejection or negative prejudice toward Islamic learning activities around the temple. Instead, the community adapted their social and religious activities to the influx of tourists and the frequent educational activities held by schools and universities. This demonstrated a collective awareness of maintaining social and religious harmony, while demonstrating a strong local understanding of religious moderation.

The concept of religious moderation essentially refers to the ability of an individual or group to practice religious teachings proportionally, without going overboard, nor diminishing the essence of the teachings themselves. This understanding emphasizes that religious moderation is a balanced attitude, namely a balance between commitment to practicing religious teachings and the ability to appreciate the social, cultural, and religious diversity surrounding them. This balanced attitude is reflected in a person's ability to remain steadfast in the principles of faith, especially the value of monotheism in Islam, while remaining tolerant of others. A balanced attitude also means being able to place religious teachings within the context of social life in a wise, open, and non-extremist manner.

From this perspective, religious moderation is not an attempt to diminish religious teachings, but rather to understand religion holistically and proportionally, thus avoiding the temptation to fall into extreme, intolerant, or radical attitudes. Religious moderation is essentially a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion that prioritizes balance, rather than excessive or insufficient extremes in practicing religious teachings (MZ Yusuf & Mutiara, 2022). In the context of field

research, informants around the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex also understood religious moderation as a balanced daily practice. A community leader, Ustad Iskandar, stated that the community continues to practice their religious beliefs steadfastly but still values the presence of non-Islamic historical sites around them as part of their local cultural heritage:

"We adhere to Islamic values, but we also respect the legacy of our past. For us, this isn't contradictory. In fact, it shows that we can live in balance." (Interview, 2025).

Based on the interview, it can be concluded that the public's understanding of religious moderation as a balanced attitude is reflected in two things: First, Strong commitment to religious teachings, especially in terms of faith and worship. Second, The ability to accept and appreciate cultural and historical diversity, without viewing it as a threat to faith. Therefore, religious moderation as a balanced attitude is the foundation that enables society to live harmoniously within diversity, while maintaining the integrity of religious values in daily life. The Muaro Jambi Temple Complex is one of the largest archaeological sites in Southeast Asia, representing past civilization, spirituality, and cultural interactions.

The existence of this site is a highly relevant space for observing how modern Muslim societies coexist with non-Islamic cultural heritage. From an academic perspective, this area can be positioned as a laboratory for religious moderation, where the values of balance, tolerance, and respect for local culture are practiced in real life. Religious moderation embodies the principle of balance between loyalty to religious teachings and openness to cultural diversity. (Salim et al., 2023) This is clearly visible in the lives of the people around the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex. They do not view the site as a threat, but rather as a part of history that must be respected. Teachers in Early Childhood Education, Annisa Kindergarten, and MTs (Islamic Junior High School) around the temple utilize this historic site as a learning medium for tolerance and cultural appreciation. They invite students to observe the temple as part of local history that demonstrates the diversity of civilizations.



Figure Muaro Jambi Temple

An understanding of history helps students see the reality of diversity as part of the dynamics of human civilization that must be appreciated, not avoided or suspected. (Rijal et al., 2022) This approach aligns with the values of religious moderation, particularly in the aspect of accepting cultural differences. The understanding that Islam can coexist with pre-Islamic cultural heritage also gains academic legitimacy. The history of Islam in the archipelago has consistently demonstrated an *accommodating character* toward local cultures, as long as they do not conflict with the principle of monotheism (Nor, 2022). Thus, students' interactions with historical sites in the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex actually strengthen their awareness that Islam has a scientific and cultural tradition that is not antithetical to pre-Islamic civilization. The use of historical spaces as a medium for learning religious moderation must be instilled through *direct social experiences*, including interactions with cultural heritage (Chadidjah & Kusnayat, 2021).

The presence of Islamic educational institutions (Early Childhood Education, Annisa Kindergarten, and Islamic Junior High School) adjacent to historical sites makes this area a living laboratory, where students learn firsthand how Islam coexists with diverse cultural heritage. Laboratories of religious moderation can be formed through social spaces where communities interact with various historical traditions, cultures, and religious practices (Said & Saidy, 2024). Religious moderation is a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion that prioritizes balance, avoiding extremes, both excessive and diminishing religious teachings. The Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, as a historical space and the prayer room as a place of worship, embody harmony between culture and religion, demonstrating the concrete practice of moderation within society.

In the context of community life around cultural sites or multicultural areas, religious moderation serves as an important foundation for creating social harmony. Social harmony is not created automatically, but is built through non-extremist religious attitudes, appreciating cultural diversity, and opening up spaces for dialogue between groups. By implementing religious moderation, communities are able to coexist despite differences in religion, tradition, and culture without causing tension. This attitude is key to building a stable and peaceful social life, added a PAI teacher, Mr. Rohimin, M.Pd.:

"Students at MTs Itihadul Khoiriya are not only guided through formal religious instruction in the classroom, but we also take them to learn about local history by visiting temple complexes. Through these activities, the children learn to appreciate the cultural heritage of the past and understand that the existence of historical relics is not something to be viewed negatively or contrary to Islamic teachings. This approach helps them develop a more open, less judgmental perspective, and realize that Islam can coexist with various cultural elements without losing its fundamental principles." (Interview, 2025).

These two interview excerpts demonstrate that religious moderation is not only understood but also practiced in educational activities and daily social life. Communities with high levels of religious moderation tend to have more harmonious social relationships and are better able to prevent horizontal conflict (Najmi, 2023). Religiously moderate societies are better able to accept pre-religious cultural sites of the majority religion as part of a shared historical narrative, rather than religious symbols to be rejected (Faozan, 2020). This aligns with the social reality of the Muaro Jambi community, which continues to practice Islamic values without negating the

existence of Buddhist historical relics. The concept of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin* is a fundamental principle that affirms that Islam brings compassion, peace, and the welfare of all nature. This principle requires its adherents to be just, tolerant, and maintain social harmony.

From a contemporary socio-religious perspective, religious moderation is a crucial paradigm for translating the value of grace into everyday practice. Thus, religious moderation is not merely discourse, but a guideline for maintaining harmonious relations between Muslims and diverse traditions, cultures, and societies. Religious moderation plays a crucial role in strengthening the image of Islam as a blessing for all creation because it teaches openness, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Indonesian Islam thrives on a moderate tradition that embraces local cultures, upholds tolerance, and rejects violence (Aziz, 2021). This moderate face of Indonesian Islam illustrates Islam as a blessing for the universe.

In a socio-cultural context, moderation also serves to create an image of Islam that is not exclusive; moderate Islam possesses the ability to engage in dialogue with history, culture, and local wisdom without losing its monotheistic roots. (Habibie et al., 2021) This finding is relevant to the dynamics of the community around the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex. The Muaro Jambi Temple area is a space rich in historical value and cultural diversity. Although a site of ancient Buddhist civilization, the area is now predominantly inhabited by Muslims and serves as a space for Islamic education through the presence of Annisa Kindergarten, MTs (Islamic Junior High School), and a prayer room. The presence of archaeological sites alongside Islamic educational institutions creates a social laboratory space that demonstrates the real practice of religious moderation. Mr. Rohimin, M.Pd provided the following statement:

"Students can learn about religion by exploring history. They learn to appreciate the legacy of the past and not easily judge something as contrary to Islamic teachings."

(Interview, 2025).

This statement illustrates an educational approach that combines religious dimensions with historical understanding and local cultural values. This integration emphasizes that the learning process is not solely focused on mastering religious material textually, but also on contextual understanding through an introduction to historical developments and the cultural heritage of the surrounding environment. In the context of Islamic education, this approach plays a crucial role in strengthening students' character, enabling them to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively, namely by examining their relationship to social, cultural, and historical realities. Education that connects normative Islamic values with societal dynamics enables students to navigate cultural diversity wisely (Rahmat & Nuraisyah, 2022).

Activities that encourage students to explore history demonstrate the application of experiential learning, a learning model that provides students with direct experiences interacting with historical objects or sites. This approach has been proven to foster deeper understanding because students not only receive information through verbal explanations but also have the opportunity to observe, reflect, and introduce religious knowledge to historical facts. Local history-based learning improves reflective thinking skills and strengthens the sense of connection between

participants who are raised with cultural identities (Letek & Keban, 2021). Through direct field experiences, students learn to understand that the development of society, culture, and religion is a long process that cannot be separated from one another.

Education that directly engages students with cultural heritage can raise their awareness of the importance of protecting and preserving cultural assets as part of their collective identity. Thus, the activities are not only informative but also educational, fostering historical awareness and social responsibility. The historical and cultural understanding provided to students makes them more cautious in assessing traditions or cultural practices that appear to differ from their Islamic understanding. This attitude of being slow to make judgments is one indicator of religious moderation. Understanding the cultural context can reduce the tendency towards exclusivism and foster students' ability to view religious teachings in a proportional and balanced manner (Letek & Keban, 2021).

Overall, the interviews demonstrated that integrating religious education, historical understanding, and an appreciation of local culture is an effective approach to developing moderate, critical, and culturally sensitive students. Therefore, religious education aims not only to produce students who understand Islamic teachings normatively, but also individuals who are able to read cultural contexts wisely, appreciate diversity, and avoid overly judgmental attitudes toward differences that arise in society. Religious moderation arises from the ability to understand reality wisely, without hastily considering something a threat to one's faith (Islam, 2020).

Religious moderation can strengthen a welcoming Islamic identity when Muslim communities are able to engage in dialogue with historical cultural heritage without hostility. Moderate Islam eschews violence, hatred, and fanaticism. This aligns with Islam's mission of mercy. Past civilizations are not viewed as threats, but as opportunities for learning. This is what is happening in Muaro Jambi. Islam's image becomes positive when its adherents are able to live side by side with diverse cultural backgrounds. Islam does not reject cultural diversity, but rather teaches people to learn from it and treat differences with respect.

This cultural approach is considered effective in building community acceptance without creating conflict or resistance, allowing Islamic teachings to develop harmoniously alongside existing traditions. These findings illustrate that interactions between students and residents are not only informative but also demonstrate the process of passing on values and history that are still maintained by the local community. This peaceful approach to spreading Islam continues to be told and is an important part of understanding the cultural and religious diversity in the Muaro Jambi Temple area (Observation, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The values of tolerance in Islamic religious education learning in the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex area are characterized by the ability of the local Muslim community, traditional leaders, and educators to combine religious commitment with respect for the cultural heritage inherent in the historical site. 1) The temple environment is utilized as a living laboratory for learning, where

teachers of Annisa Kindergarten and Itihadul Khoiriyyah Islamic Junior High School integrate wasathiyah values through a contextual, historical, and experiential learning pedagogical approach that provides opportunities for students to understand cultural diversity; practice tolerance, and avoid extreme judgments of differences. 2) The community remains steadfast in the value of monotheism while interpreting the existence of historical sites as part of a cultural identity that needs to be maintained, so that their religious practices are inclusive, balanced, and harmonious, in line with the paradigm of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin; 3) Socio-religious life, worship activities, and educational activities take place side by side with the flow of cultural tourism without conflict, indicating a strong internalization of religious moderation at the practical level. Thus, the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex is an important empirical example of how religious moderation strengthens the function of Islamic education, forms moderate character, and creates social harmony in the context of a multicultural society.

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