



TONG NGIN FAN NGIN JIT JONG: LOCAL RELIGIOUS LITERATURE AS A GRASSROOTS MODEL FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

TONG NGIN FAN NGIN JIT JONG: LITERATUR KEAGAMAAN LOKAL SEBAGAI MODEL AKAR RUMPUT BAGI KEBIJAKAN MODERASI BERAGAMA DI ASIA TENGGARA

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Abstract

This study examines the local expression Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong from Bangka Belitung as a form of local wisdom that functions as living religious literature, a symbol of tolerance, and a safeguard against radicalism in Southeast Asia. The expression not only represents cultural identity but also embodies religious and social values that contribute to strengthening religious moderation and social resilience in multicultural societies. The purpose of this study is to analyze how Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong operates as living religious literature that shapes and sustains harmonious relations between Chinese and Malay communities in Bangka Belitung. This research employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review, analyzing academic sources, historical archives, local media, and policy documents that document the historical trajectory and contemporary relevance of the expression. The findings indicate that Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong, which means "Chinese and Malay are the same," emerged from a long process of cultural acculturation since the seventeenth century, was reinforced through anti-colonial solidarity, and was later institutionalized in regional cultural policies. The expression functions

as a living cultural-religious text that reflects values of equality, interfaith brotherhood, and mutual cooperation. Further findings highlight the role of local media in reproducing and strengthening narratives of social harmony, as well as the contribution of this expression to enhancing social resilience against intolerance and identity-based polarization. Conceptually, this study contributes to the field of religious literature by positioning *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a model of grassroots pluralism rooted in local wisdom that is relevant for application in other multicultural regions of Southeast Asia. The limitation of this study lies in the absence of ethnographic fieldwork; therefore, future research employing participatory approaches is recommended.

Keywords: Local Wisdom, Religious Literature, Religious Moderation Policy, Tolerance

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji ungkapan lokal *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* dari Bangka Belitung sebagai bentuk kearifan lokal yang berfungsi sebagai literatur keagamaan hidup, simbol toleransi, serta penangkal radikalisme di Asia Tenggara. Ungkapan ini tidak hanya merepresentasikan identitas budaya, tetapi juga memuat nilai-nilai keagamaan dan sosial yang berperan dalam memperkuat moderasi beragama dan resiliensi sosial dalam masyarakat multikultural. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis bagaimana *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* berfungsi sebagai literatur keagamaan hidup yang membentuk dan memelihara relasi harmonis antara komunitas Tionghoa dan Melayu di Bangka Belitung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi literatur dengan menganalisis sumber-sumber akademik, arsip sejarah, media lokal, serta dokumen kebijakan yang merekam perjalanan historis dan relevansi kontemporer ungkapan tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*, yang bermakna “Tionghoa dan Melayu itu sama,” lahir dari proses akulturasi panjang sejak abad ke-17, diperkuat oleh solidaritas anti-kolonial, dan kemudian dilembagakan dalam kebijakan kebudayaan daerah. Ungkapan ini berfungsi sebagai teks budaya-religius yang hidup, yang merepresentasikan nilai kesetaraan, persaudaraan lintas iman, dan semangat gotong royong. Temuan lainnya menegaskan peran media lokal dalam mereproduksi dan memperkuat narasi harmoni sosial, serta kontribusi ungkapan ini dalam meningkatkan resiliensi masyarakat terhadap intoleransi dan polarisasi identitas. Secara konseptual, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian literatur keagamaan dengan menempatkan *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* sebagai model pluralisme berbasis kearifan lokal yang relevan untuk diterapkan di kawasan multikultural lain di Asia Tenggara. Keterbatasan penelitian ini terletak pada belum digunakannya data etnografi lapangan, sehingga penelitian lanjutan dengan pendekatan partisipatoris direkomendasikan.

Kata kunci: Kearifan Lokal, Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama, Literatur Keagamaan, Toleransi.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is recognized as the largest archipelagic country in the world, comprising more than 17,000 islands and inhabited by over 270 million people from diverse ethnic, religious, racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. According to the Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia is home to approximately 633 ethnic groups spread from Sabang to Merauke (Piyoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017). The national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* affirms diversity as a valuable asset that must be preserved. However, in practice, this diversity often becomes a

source of tension when not supported by multicultural awareness and strong values of tolerance (Yunita et al., 2024).

Geographically, Indonesia lies within Southeast Asia, a region historically characterized by pluralism in culture, ethnicity, and religion. Countries in this region share common challenges, such as identity politics, religious intolerance, and interethnic conflict (Putri et al., 2023). In such a context, local wisdom that successfully fosters harmony and mutual respect becomes highly relevant as a grassroots model for social cohesion, both nationally and regionally. This study is also relevant to Indonesia's national policy on religious moderation, launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as part of the Religious Moderation Roadmap 2020-2024. The motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*, with its emphasis on equality and interfaith solidarity, aligns with the four core indicators of the policy: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence and accommodation of local culture. Hence, this paper positions local religious literature not only as cultural wisdom but also as a potential framework for implementing religious moderation policy at the grassroots level.

The Bangka Belitung Islands Province exemplifies this reality. Established in 2000, the province consists of two main islands Bangka and Belitung along with smaller surrounding islands. Besides being one of the world's major tin-producing regions, Bangka Belitung is widely recognized for its strong interethnic integration, particularly between the Malay and Chinese communities. For more than two centuries, these groups have lived side by side, creating a rare example of long-standing social harmony despite cultural and religious differences (Theo, 2014).

The presence of the Chinese community in Bangka dates back to the 18th century, coinciding with the expansion of the tin mining industry. Brought in by both the Dutch colonial administration and the Sultan of Palembang, Chinese workers primarily of Hakka origin gradually settled in the region and formed a Peranakan identity through intermarriage and cultural adaptation (Sya et al., 2019). This historical process of acculturation resulted in deep social integration, expressed not only in language, food, and customs, but also in shared philosophies of coexistence.

One of the most notable outcomes of this integration is the emergence of the local motto "*Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*", literally meaning "The Chinese and the Malays are the same." This phrase, expressed in a combination of Hakka and Malay, goes beyond cultural rhetoric. It embodies a living moral and religious text that teaches equality, fraternity, and the rejection of discrimination.

adaptation (Teddy, 2020). As a form of oral literature, the motto reflects how local communities articulate religiously inspired values in a textualized cultural expression. Its revitalization during the administration of Governor Hudarni Rani (2002-2007) further illustrates its significance as a medium of sociocultural and religious literacy in public life (Sya & Marta, 2019).

Research by Damiasih & Riana (2022) shows that the phrase Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong not only functions as cultural discourse, but has also been internalized as a practice of active tolerance in the daily lives of the people of Bangka Belitung. The study confirms that this motto is manifested through concrete actions such as inter-ethnic cooperation in economic activities, mutual assistance in religious celebrations, and solidarity in resolving social issues making it not just a symbol, but a consistently practiced social ethic. Interfaith collaboration during festivals and communal activities shows how this motto serves as a form of living religious literature, transmitted through oral media, rituals, and social interactions that form the foundation of the local community's multicultural ethics. In line with these findings, research by Meta & Rustono shows that both local and national media consistently present this motto in a positive narrative, reinforcing its status as a cultural-religious discourse that not only promotes harmony but also offers an inspiring model for pluralistic communities in Southeast Asia (Sya et al., 2019).

The historical strength of this motto has contributed to the resilience of Bangka's social fabric. During the 1998 riots, when violence against Chinese communities erupted in several parts of Indonesia, the Chinese in Bangka were notably protected by their Malay neighbors an indication of how deeply "*Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*" had been internalized as a principle of solidarity (Theo, 2014). Nevertheless, modern challenges remain. Damiasih & Riana (2022) note that younger generations are increasingly unfamiliar with the motto's history and philosophical meaning, as globalization and digitalization accelerate the erosion of traditional values of tolerance.

Despite its evident significance, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* has largely been treated as a cultural symbol rather than as an object of serious theoretical inquiry. Existing studies on interfaith tolerance and religious harmony in Southeast Asia predominantly focus on institutional dialogue, state-driven policies, or elite-level initiatives, leaving the role of local religious literature as an everyday mechanism of peacebuilding relatively underexplored. As a result, there is limited scholarly understanding of how grassroots cultural expressions

function as living religious texts that actively shape ethical conduct, religious identity, and intercommunal relations.

In this context, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* should be understood not only as a local motto, but also as a form of religious oral literature that contributes to religious literacy, intercultural education, and peace building. The term “religious literature” in this study emphasizes that these expressions are not merely folk tales or ordinary oral traditions, but rather a collection of cultural texts imbued with moral and religious authority in the form of speech, symbols, and social practices that shape ethical values, religious identity, and inter-community relations.

The history of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* began with the early migration of Chinese to Bangka Island, particularly since the 17th century when miners from China came to mine tin, and many of them married local Malay women, forming a peranakan community and fostering ethnic acculturation. This process then developed into a philosophy of togetherness that was widely popularized through grassroots discourse and later formalized in public-political discourse, including by local leaders. In historical records, Sya & Marta's (2019) research traces how this solidarity emerged during the anti-colonial resistance for example, during the Bangka War led by *Depati Amir* so that this spirit of unity became strongly ingrained as a collective reference for the Chinese and Malay communities in the region.

Through the framework of religious literature, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* functions as a living moral text: it is passed down orally, recited during celebrations such as Chinese New Year and other social events, and appears in cultural symbols such as dances and acculturated foods. The value of equality (“Chinese and Malay are the same”) contained within it is not only a rhetorical foundation but also a basis for social practice, strengthening shared identity and interfaith tolerance in Bangka Belitung. Thus, this expression is not merely a traditional heritage, but a dynamic and relevant cultural-religious asset for multicultural communities in the contemporary era.

Compared to oral tradition, which primarily highlights the mode of transmission, religious literature underscores the substance of teachings and their role as ethical guidance for harmonious living. Meanwhile, unlike broader cultural texts, which may encompass arts, rituals, or performances, religious literature carries explicit normative and spiritual values that connect communities across ethnic and religious boundaries. Thus, categorizing *Tong*

Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong as religious literature emphasizes its role as both a cultural artifact and a medium of peace education in Southeast Asia.

While studies on interfaith tolerance in Southeast Asia often focus on institutional dialogue, state policies, or formal interreligious councils, much less attention has been given to the role of local *religious literature* as an everyday practice of peace education. Existing works frequently highlight elite-driven or policy-based initiatives, whereas community-level cultural expressions remain underexplored. This study seeks to address that gap by examining *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a local religious text that not only reflects but also actively mediates interethnic and interreligious tolerance in Bangka, thereby contributing to the broader discourse of pluralism in Southeast Asia.

Previous studies on Indigenous communities in Indonesia, such as the Kerinci in Jambi (Mukhlis et al., 2025), the Ada' Mappurondo in West Sulawesi (Hidayat, 2025) and the Suroan tradition in Lumajang (Mujibuddin & Zuliana, 2025), have emphasized cultural education, ritual practices, and structural resilience as strategies for preserving identity. While sharing similar goals of safeguarding cultural identity amid modernization, this study is distinct in its focus on a public motto as a symbolic text. It highlights how cultural expressions of local wisdom can function as *religious literature in practice*, transmitting tolerance values across generations. Different from previous studies, this article specifically examines a public motto as a living religious text, positioning it as a novel model for grassroots tolerance in Southeast Asia.

The analysis of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* in this paper is informed by two theoretical perspectives. First, peace education theory emphasizes the cultivation of values, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals and communities to resolve conflict peacefully and build sustainable coexistence (Harris & Morrison, 2014). Second, concept of everyday peace underlines the importance of mundane, localized, and culturally embedded practices that sustain social harmony outside formal institutions (Mac Ginty, 2014). Applying these frameworks, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* can be understood as both a pedagogical tool for transmitting ethical values and a form of everyday peace practice that bridges ethnic and religious communities in Bangka.

Accordingly, this article contributes both theoretically and practically to the study of religious literature, cultural resilience, and Indigenous wisdom in Southeast Asia. It offers a communication framework through symbolic integration, demonstrating how a local motto can be transformed into a living religious text that nurtures tolerance and strengthens social harmony in plural

societies. The first section of this article discusses the historical and cultural background of the motto, the second explores its function as a form of religious literature and its role in shaping interethnic relations, while the third analyzes its significance in countering radicalism and its potential replication across Southeast Asia.

In addition, it is important to consider how the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* can be translated more formally into local government policy as part of a strategy for cultural sustainability and inclusive social governance. Its establishment as an official cultural value through the framework of cultural development, religious moderation, character education, and the strengthening of religious harmony will provide institutional legitimacy for this motto to function more broadly as an ethical and social guideline. This legitimacy not only elevates it as a symbol of the collective identity of the people of Bangka Belitung, but also strengthens the capacity of local government to mainstream values of tolerance into cross-sectoral programs such as education, cultural tourism, mining industry CSR, and community-based conflict mitigation programs.

With the right policies, this motto can be operationalized through local content curricula, annual cultural activities, multicultural dialogue forums, and community development instruments, so that it is not only understood as historical heritage, but also as a policy instrument that promotes social resilience and strengthens cohesive structures in a pluralistic society. Thus, recognizing this motto as part of the official policy of local governments will increase its impact as relevant and adaptive social capital in the face of contemporary dynamics, while strengthening its position as a model of local wisdom that can be replicated in other regions of Southeast Asia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a literature study approach. The choice of method is based on the need to understand the symbolic meaning, cultural context, and religious dimension of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a form of living religious literature. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate because the study seeks to interpret the social, historical, and textual meanings embedded within local wisdom rather than to measure or quantify them. The literature study approach further allows for a comprehensive examination of existing scholarly works, archival records, media

coverage, and secondary data that document both the historical development and contemporary relevance of the motto.

Data collection in this research was conducted through systematic reviews of academic literature, including journal articles, books, theses, and reports relevant to the themes of religious literature, local wisdom, tolerance, and radicalism in Southeast Asia. Sources were identified using databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and local Indonesian repositories. In addition to academic sources, the study also examined government documents, newspaper articles, and online media coverage that specifically address the historical use and sociocultural significance of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*. This triangulation of sources enabled the researcher to cross-check information and to capture both scholarly interpretations and popular narratives of the motto.

The unit of analysis in this study is the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* itself, understood as a cultural-religious text that carries normative values. However, instead of treating the motto merely as a static phrase, the study situates it within its broader sociohistorical context. This means that the analysis takes into account the historical migration of the Chinese community to Bangka, the processes of acculturation with the Malay population, and the political recognition of the motto during the administration of Governor Hudarni Rani in the early 2000s. By contextualizing the motto in this way, the study is able to interpret its role as a living religious literature that not only reflects but also shapes social relations in a multicultural society.

The data analysis process followed an interpretive qualitative framework. First, texts and documents were collected and organized according to thematic categories, including (1) historical accounts of Chinese-Malay relations in Bangka, (2) sociocultural studies of local wisdom, (3) analyses of religious tolerance and radicalism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and (4) specific references to *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*. Second, thematic coding was applied to identify recurring patterns, such as the motto's association with equality, fraternity, and interfaith solidarity. Third, the data were interpreted through the lens of religious literature studies, emphasizing how oral and symbolic texts function as mediums of religious literacy and social cohesion.

Validity in this study was enhanced through source triangulation and theoretical grounding. By consulting diverse forms of literature ranging from academic works to media narratives the researcher reduced the risk of one-dimensional interpretation. Moreover, the theoretical framework of religious literature provided a lens to ensure that the analysis remained focused on

the intersection of religion, culture, and identity. This approach allowed the research to avoid treating *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* merely as folklore or political rhetoric, instead framing it as a symbolic text with enduring religious and ethical significance.

DISCUSSION

Phrase Origins and Historical Context of Acculturation in Bangka Island

Bangka Island has long been recognized as one of Indonesia's most harmonious regions in terms of interethnic relations, especially between the Chinese and Malay communities. This harmony, however, cannot be reduced merely to pragmatic coexistence; it is deeply rooted in cultural and religiously infused expressions that function as moral guidance. One of the most important of these is the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*, literally meaning “The Chinese and the Malays are the same.” Within the framework of religious literature, the phrase embodies an ethic of egalitarianism, inclusivity, and the recognition of human dignity values that parallel Islamic and Confucian teachings on social justice and mutual respect.

Beyond its linguistic expression, the phrase illustrates what Geertz (1983) describes as a “local text” embedded in everyday life, functioning not only as symbolic rhetoric but also as a lived practice of mutual recognition. It reflects what Mac Ginty (2014) calls everyday peace, namely the mundane yet crucial practices by which ordinary people navigate diversity and prevent conflict. In this light, the motto’s endurance across generations demonstrates how a simple cultural utterance can acquire the status of religious literature: a living text imbued with moral authority and sustained through community practice.

The historical roots of this expression trace back to the 17th and 18th centuries during Dutch colonial rule, when Chinese laborers (*huagong*) from Fujian and Guangdong were brought to Bangka for tin mining (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Over time, they established enduring bonds with the local Malay population, giving rise to a hybrid cultural identity that integrated both material and spiritual dimensions. Evidence of this synthesis is found in shared foods such as Hok Lo Pan martabak, blended clothing aesthetics, and artistic practices like the Chinese-Malay Zapin dance (Adiatmono & Bachtiar, 2019). Each of these hybrid forms represents not only cultural exchange but also a lived theology of coexistence.

Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong is not merely a civic slogan but a reconciliatory dictum imbued with spiritual authority. It reflects principles of equality, non-superiority, and mutual respect core tenets echoed in religious discourse across traditions. Daily practices such as joint religious festivities, interethnic marriages, and shared community projects demonstrate that the motto functions as a form of living scripture, embodying values commonly reserved for canonical texts (Damiasih & Riana, 2022).

Its roots in resistance against Dutch colonialism further enhance its religious-literary stature. Historical records and oral traditions recount that Chinese and Malay communities, under leaders like Depati Amir, united in anti-colonial struggles, with Chinese figures contributing alongside Malay fighters (Madjid et al., 2017). This experience of shared sacrifice reinforced a narrative of unity that transcends ethnicity. Even during the 1998 anti-Chinese riots, Bangka remained peaceful, reflecting the resilient moral force of the motto (Theo, 2014).

On the national level, the phrase resonates with Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as localized theological texts that encode pluralism. The motto thus acts not just as historical memory but as a living piece of religious literature, offering an ethical framework urgently needed in today's context of polarization and radicalism (Yunita et al., 2024).

Yet challenges remain: younger generations often lack awareness of its religious and cultural depth. Preservation efforts through multicultural curricula and heritage tourism are needed to ensure its transmission. Historical studies affirm that the settlement of Hakka migrants under agreements between the Sultanate of Palembang and Dutch colonizers, as well as cultural syntheses in art and architecture laid the groundwork for a shared identity. As argued, this process gave rise to a "new culture" that reinforced both traditions without erasing them (Adiatmono & Bachtiar, 2019).

In the postcolonial period, especially under Governor Hudarni Rani (2002-2007), the phrase was further institutionalized as a symbol of regional unity, disseminated through policies and media campaigns (Sya & Marta, 2019). This trajectory demonstrates that *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* functions both as literature with normative authority and as a political-religious instrument of peace. As such, it merits recognition not simply as folklore but as a sacred social text born of struggle, solidarity, and shared spiritual values that has the potential to inspire tolerance across Southeast Asia.

This motto can also be situated within a wider theoretical framework that connects cultural expression with peace studies. Geertz's (1983) notion of culture as a "local text" highlights how communities encode their worldview and ethics into shared symbols and narratives. Similarly, Mac Ginty's (2014) idea of *everyday peace* illuminates how ordinary people reproduce tolerance and solidarity in their daily lives beyond formal institutions. In this regard, "Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong" may be read as a vernacular theology that sustains peaceful coexistence. James Scott's concept of infrapolitics further explains how subaltern groups historically deployed such expressions as subtle tools of resistance against colonial power. By bringing these perspectives together, the motto emerges not only as cultural heritage but also as a living archive of local knowledge and political agency.

The Role of Media in Constructing a Narrative of Tolerance

Media constitutes one of the most influential agents in shaping public narratives of religious tolerance and intercultural harmony. In Bangka Belitung, the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* has been consistently framed by local media as a unifying principle with quasi-scriptural authority. Outlets such as Radar Bangka, Tribun Bangka, and Media Indonesia portray it not merely as cultural heritage but as a guiding text of life that echoes the role of religious literature in shaping collective morality.

Local and national media have consistently played an important role in framing *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a symbol of interethnic harmony. Reports in newspapers, radio, and later online platforms highlight instances of collaboration between Malay and Chinese communities, particularly during cultural festivals and religious events. This consistent coverage has reinforced the motto's status as a public narrative of tolerance, shaping collective memory and legitimizing it as a cultural identity marker.

In the digital era, media functions not only as a recorder of social reality but also as a constructor of moral authority. By continuously reproducing the motto in positive contexts, media outlets contribute to what Anderson terms an *imagined community*, where dispersed individuals share a sense of collective belonging through mediated narratives (Anderson, 2006). Thus, the circulation of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* in broadcast and online spaces enhances its reach, transforms it into a moral reference, and anchors it as part of the cultural repertoire of plural Indonesia.

Meta & Rustono show how local media employ framing techniques that elevate the motto into a narrative of social cohesion (Sya & Marta, 2019). Metaphors such as “a beautiful painting of harmony” or “a mirror of unity across differences” imbue the phrase with literary weight, transforming it into a moral text with religious undertones. The media thus position the slogan as more than political rhetoric; they sacralize it within the cultural imagination of Bangka Belitung.

Coverage of the motto’s institutionalization during the governorship of Hudarni Rani further demonstrates the media’s role in canonizing *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a symbolic scripture of pluralism. Consistent media narratives reinforce collective memory, ensuring the motto is perceived not only as cultural capital but also as a sacred value underpinning community life. In this way, the press acts as a secondary author of religious literature amplifying, interpreting, and recontextualizing local wisdom for contemporary audiences.

Moreover, media framing emphasizes concrete illustrations of tolerance in practice such as joint religious celebrations, economic collaboration, and interethnic cooperation transforming abstract wisdom into embodied examples. By narrating tolerance in this way, media do not simply report but co-author the living literature of Bangka society (Sya & Marta, 2019).

In the digital era, where information flows rapidly and narratives compete for dominance, the persistent reinforcement of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* by Bangka media offers a model of how journalism can function as religious pedagogy. The phrase is not merely reported but re-enchanted with moral and theological significance, thereby strengthening its role as a cultural scripture against intolerance and radicalism.

Thus, the role of media in Bangka Belitung transcends communication; it is constitutive of religious literature in practice. Through consistent storytelling, the media help to animate *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a text of tolerance, one that serves both as historical memory and as a guide for living together in diversity. This media-constructed narrative offers a replicable model for Southeast Asian societies seeking to cultivate intercultural solidarity.

Tong Ngin Fan Ngin as a Form of Socio-Cultural Resilience

The persistence of the motto in Bangka society illustrates its role as a source of socio-cultural resilience. During periods of national tension, such as the

anti-Chinese riots in 1998, the motto served as a shield, as Malay neighbors in Bangka actively protected Chinese communities. This indicates the depth of internalization of the phrase as a principle of solidarity that surpasses ethnic divides.

The function of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as socio-cultural resilience illustrates what James Scott calls *infrapolitics* the subtle, everyday practices that safeguard vulnerable communities from systemic violence (Scott, 1990). The motto represents a moral consensus built from below, where values of fraternity and protection emerge not from state imposition but from shared cultural commitments. Furthermore, its philosophical grounding resonates with Islamic teachings of *ukhuwah insaniyah* (universal brotherhood) and Confucian values of *ren* (humaneness), forming a hybrid moral foundation. In this way, the motto operates as a “cultural immune system”, enabling the community to resist external shocks and preserve social cohesion (Carrillo & Kirmayer, 2023).

The motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* is more than an expression of harmony; it functions as a text of socio-religious resilience in a time of global polarization. Its embedded values of equality and reverence for diversity resonate with scriptural principles in both Islam and Confucianism, granting it the character of religious literature that sustains collective identity amid rapid modernization and political tensions (Damiasih & Riana, 2022).

Damiasih and Riana highlight that the power of the motto lies in its ability to nurture grassroots solidarity. This solidarity manifests through community practices such as multi-ethnic *kerja bakti*, joint festivals, and intercommunity trade partnerships all of which embody scripturalized ethics of cooperation and justice. In this sense, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* operates as a vernacular scripture that guides daily conduct.

Ibrahim et al. emphasize that Bangka’s avoidance of major conflict, despite diversity, stems from long-term cultural assimilation that created a “new culture” (Ibrahim et al., 2020). This aligns with theological understandings of *ijtihad al-ijtimā'i* (collective reasoning in social life), wherein communities negotiate differences to produce a shared ethical framework. The motto thus represents a lived exegesis of multiculturalism.

Online religious discourse, as revealed in Effendi's (2023) article, places the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as a theological interpretation of the Pancasila values. This motto is described as “social capital” for ensuring peaceful elections in the Bangka Belitung Islands, a tangible manifestation of cultural

mechanisms that prevent ethnic conflict. This shows that the resilience of this motto is not merely coincidental, but is based on a theological foundation of collective respect for human dignity and coexistence in diversity.

The motto's institutionalization into education, tourism, and local arts also reflects its role as a canon of cultural theology. Curriculum integration, collaborative festivals like Chinese-Malay Zapin and *Cap Go Meh* performances demonstrate how it transcends oral tradition to become a living canon of interfaith harmony. Ultimately, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* epitomizes inclusive multiculturalism by rejecting majoritarian hierarchies in favor of egalitarian relations. It is a vernacular form of religious literature that not only preserves identity but also constructs resilience. As such, it stands as a replicable model for multicultural societies across Southeast Asia.

Relevance and Replication Potential in Southeast Asia

Beyond Bangka, the case of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* holds broader significance for Southeast Asia, a region marked by pluralism and frequent interethnic or interreligious tensions. Local wisdoms such as Malaysia's *Rukun Negara*, the Philippines' *Bayanihan*, or Thailand's community-based Buddhist- Muslim dialogues reveal parallel traditions of grassroots tolerance. Like these, the Bangka motto exemplifies how cultural-religious texts can provide a normative foundation for coexistence, functioning as locally rooted yet regionally resonant peace practices.

Positioning *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* within the broader Southeast Asian landscape underscores Lederach's notion of *elicitive peacebuilding*, where peace emerges from within cultural contexts rather than being imposed externally (Lederach, 1997). As such, the Bangka experience suggests that public mottos and cultural texts can be replicated as pedagogical models for tolerance, adapted to diverse societies seeking to bridge ethnic and religious divides.

The wisdom of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* demonstrates that solidarity across ethnic and religious lines can be cultivated organically through local religious literature rather than imposed policies. The phrase, which asserts the equality of Chinese and Malay communities, has proven effective as a sacred social text capable of uniting a plural society. In the Southeast Asian context marked by ethnic tensions and rising radicalism this model provides a compelling alternative.

Regional pluralism in Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines is often fraught with identity-based conflict. In this setting, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* offers a culturally resonant model for peacebuilding that arises from grassroots theology. Its values of coexistence manifest in lived practices such as joint Cap Go Meh celebrations, lion dance events involving both Chinese and Malay participants, and interfaith cooperation in maintaining places of worship (Sya & Marta, 2019). These activities demonstrate that the phrase functions not as passive tolerance but as an active scriptural ethic of mutual care.

What distinguishes this model is its refusal to erase difference. Instead, it affirms distinct identities while fostering collective solidarity mirroring the theological principle of unity-in-diversity. In doing so, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* transcends the binary of majority and minority, offering a horizontal model of multiculturalism grounded in empathy and justice. The motto also presents opportunities for cultural diplomacy. Indonesia, drawing on its success in institutionalizing *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*, can promote such models across Southeast Asia through educational exchange and interfaith forums. By advancing local wisdom as religious literature, Indonesia strengthens regional resilience against radical ideologies.

In sum, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* is not merely a cultural slogan but a living scripture of tolerance. Its resonance lies in demonstrating that harmony is achieved not by homogenizing difference but by sanctifying diversity as a shared blessing. As Southeast Asia faces escalating polarization, this Bangka-born wisdom offers a model for grassroots peacebuilding rooted in religious literature and everyday practice.

Taken together, the findings position *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* as both a symbolic and practical manifestation of peace education and everyday peace. The motto functions simultaneously as religious literature (textualizing moral values), as media discourse (constructing narratives of harmony), as socio-cultural resilience (shielding communities in times of crisis), and as a replicable model for Southeast Asia (informing regional peacebuilding). This multidimensional role demonstrates that local cultural texts are not merely historical artifacts but active instruments of intercultural pedagogy and conflict prevention.

From a policy perspective, the case of *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* demonstrates how local religious literature can serve as a cultural foundation for inclusive policy-making. Integrating such grassroots wisdom into regional frameworks such as ASEAN's Plan of Action on Culture of Prevention (2018)

can strengthen preventive diplomacy and social cohesion policies (Yue, 2019). Furthermore, local governments in Indonesia could incorporate similar mottos into civic education and interfaith programs as part of their regional implementation of the Religious Moderation Policy. In the tin mining area on Bangka Island, the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* has proven to remain alive as a social ethos that strengthens cohesion between communities, both at the settlement level and in the daily economic activities of the miners.

In practice, interactions between Hakka miners, the Malay community, and migrant workers are complementary, as demonstrated by patterns of cooperation at mining sites, mutual aid networks, and consensus-based problem-solving mechanisms. The value of “unity” contained in the motto is reflected in collective solidarity when facing mining risks, such as work accidents or land conflicts, where all ethnic groups respond with a spirit of togetherness without emphasizing their respective identities. This social finding shows that the motto is not only a Hakka cultural heritage, but has become cross-ethnic social capital that strengthens the harmony of the mining community. Thus, the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* is relevant and serves as a value foundation for multicultural communities in tin mining areas, while supporting local government efforts to strengthen religious moderation, inclusiveness, and a culture of conflict prevention in the context of regional development.

Accordingly, this study contributes theoretically by bridging peace education theory and everyday peace studies with the field of religious literature. Practically, it highlights the urgent need to revitalize such mottos in younger generations, ensuring that grassroots wisdom remains a living heritage for sustaining tolerance in plural societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has certain limitations. The analysis primarily relied on literature and secondary sources, with limited engagement in fieldwork or primary ethnographic data. Furthermore, the focus on Bangka may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as similar mottos or expressions in other regions remain underexplored. Another limitation is the lack of intergenerational perspectives, particularly how younger populations interpret, internalize, or perhaps distance themselves from the motto in the digital era.

For further studies, researchers are encouraged to conduct comparative analyses of local mottos across different Indonesian provinces and Southeast Asian societies to explore the diversity of religiously inspired oral literature. Integrating digital ethnography and media studies could also provide valuable perspectives on how such mottos are disseminated, reinterpreted, or challenged in online spaces. Additionally, involving youth and interfaith actors in empirical research could illuminate how the symbolic power of mottos like *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* can be sustained and adapted to contemporary challenges.

To strengthen the social impact of the *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* motto in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province, the local government needs to establish a number of strategic policies that position the values of tolerance and interethnic harmony as part of social development. First, the provincial government can institutionalize the motto into local curriculum policies, especially in subjects such as regional cultural education, religious moderation, and local history, so that the younger generation understands the philosophical roots of the motto as a shared heritage of the Hakka and Malay communities. Second, it is important for the local government to strengthen the Religious Harmony Forum through funding support, interfaith collaboration programs, and social mediation training, given that the Religious Harmony Forum has played a significant role in maintaining social cohesion in the Bangka Belitung Islands.

Third, the provincial government can develop an annual cultural agenda such as multicultural festivals, ethnic literacy workshops, and regional Chinese New Year celebrations, where the motto *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* is used as the main narrative of solidarity, as reflected in various forms of community appreciation during religious celebrations. Fourth, integrating this slogan into the CSR policies of mining companies and regional industries will strengthen the business world's commitment to social harmony, especially in areas with high diversity dynamics. Fifth, the government can use digital ethnography and social media campaigns to disseminate the meaning of this motto in visual formats, digital stories, and creative content, so that its relevance is maintained among the younger generation and in the digital space, which is often a source of disinformation. This series of policies is expected not only to maintain harmony between groups, but also to ensure that the values of tolerance contained in *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* remain a strong social capital for the people of Bangka Belitung in facing future social, political, and economic challenges.

CLOSING

This study has demonstrated that *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong*, a motto originating from the Bangka community, is more than a cultural slogan; it represents a form of living religious literature that encapsulates moral teachings, values of equality, and principles of tolerance. Historically rooted in the integration between Malay and Chinese communities, the motto has played a central role in maintaining social cohesion in a plural society. Its resilience was evident during moments of national crisis, such as the 1998 riots, when local communities in Bangka chose solidarity over violence. These findings affirm that oral texts with religious and cultural dimensions can function as effective tools for peacebuilding and as bulwarks against radicalism in Southeast Asia.

In the policy domain, the findings suggest that *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* can inform the design of inclusive religious policies at both national and local levels. Its principles of equality and coexistence offer an indigenous framework compatible with Indonesia's Religious Moderation Policy and can support the institutionalization of multicultural education. Regionally, this model can inspire Southeast Asian governments to adopt culturally grounded approaches to countering radicalism and promoting interfaith harmony.

The contribution of this study lies in positioning a local motto as a symbolic text within the field of religious literature. While previous research on indigenous wisdom in Indonesia has largely emphasized rituals, folklore, or communal practices, this article highlights how public mottos can serve as vehicles of religious literacy, transmitting values across generations in a textualized yet lived form. This approach broadens the theoretical framework of religious literature by extending it to oral expressions that are socially enacted, thereby offering new insights into how religion, culture, and identity intersect in contemporary plural societies.

The implications of these findings are both practical and theoretical. On the practical side, *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* provides a model of community-based tolerance education that could be integrated into multicultural curricula and interfaith dialogue programs. It also suggests that local mottos can be revitalized as tools of peace communication, particularly in societies vulnerable to sectarian divisions and radical narratives. Theoretically, the motto exemplifies how localized religiously inspired texts contribute to broader debates on cultural resilience and the role of indigenous knowledge in sustaining social harmony in Southeast Asia.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms that *Tong Ngin Fan Ngin Jit Jong* is not only a heritage of Bangka but also a living testament to the potential of local wisdom to nurture tolerance and resist radicalism. By framing it as religious literature, the article contributes to both scholarly discourse and practical initiatives that seek to strengthen pluralism and intercultural harmony in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

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