

# INTERNALIZATION OF THE VALUES OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF PRAMBANAN TEMPLE AS A CULTURAL HERITAGE

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## Abstract

Prambanan Temple, as one of the world's cultural heritage sites, holds not only historical and architectural significance but also cultural messages that remain relevant in contemporary Indonesian society. This study aims to examine how the preservation of Prambanan Temple can serve as a medium for internalizing the values of unity and diversity within a multicultural context. Amid the challenges of globalization, rising intolerance, and shifting social values, cultural heritage has great potential as an educational tool to strengthen national character. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and literature review, this research explores the symbolic meanings and social roles of Prambanan Temple in fostering awareness of peaceful coexistence and respect for differences. The findings reveal that participatory and education-integrated preservation efforts can enhance a sense of ownership of national cultural identity and encourage younger generations to embrace the values of unity and diversity. Therefore, preserving cultural heritage should not only focus on physical conservation but also be recognized as an essential part of national character development.

**Keywords:** *Prambanan Temple, cultural preservation, unity, diversity, national identity*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation rich in cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and traditional diversity. This diversity is an undeniable social reality and presents significant potential for strengthening national identity. However, this diversity can also pose a serious challenge if not balanced with strong values of unity. In this context, efforts to internalize the values of unity and diversity are crucial, especially amidst increasingly complex globalization and socio-political dynamics. One way to instill these values is by reviving the nation's cultural heritage as a unifying symbol. Cultural heritage serves not only as a historical legacy but also as a reflection of the noble values upheld by our ancestors. Prambanan Temple, a UNESCO-recognized world heritage site, plays a strategic role in this context. Indonesia's largest Hindu temple is not only an architectural masterpiece of the past but also embodies philosophical values embodying the spirit of togetherness, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Prambanan Temple was built in the 9th century by the Sanjaya Dynasty as a tribute to the Trimurti, the three main deities of Hinduism: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Interestingly, the Prambanan Temple complex also features relics from other religions, such as the Buddhist Sewu Temple. The coexistence of these two religions in one area is a concrete symbol of the harmony and diversity that have existed for centuries in Java. These values should be internalized by the current generation as part of shaping national character. In modern life, marked by rampant social polarization and identity conflicts, preserving cultural sites like Prambanan Temple is crucial not only for physical conservation but also as an educational and cultural tool that emphasizes the importance of coexisting despite

differences. Preserving cultural heritage is inextricably linked to the process of reinterpreting its values and how these values can be implemented in community life. This study aims to examine how the values of unity and diversity can be internalized through efforts to preserve Prambanan Temple. The focus of the study lies in the public's understanding of the cultural values contained in the temple and how cultural preservation can be used as a tool to strengthen social cohesion and national spirit. By exploring the relationship between cultural preservation and the formation of national character, it is hoped that this journal can contribute ideas towards strengthening national identity based on inclusive and tolerant cultural values. Indonesia is known as a nation with extraordinary cultural and historical richness. From Sabang to Merauke, various ethnicities, religions, languages, and customs live side by side in one vast archipelago. This diversity is not merely statistical data, but a social reality that we experience every day in various aspects of life. However, behind this diversity, Indonesia also faces a major challenge to maintain a sense of unity and togetherness amidst various existing differences. Social tensions, issues of intolerance, and divisions that occur in several regions serve as a reminder that the values of diversity and unity cannot be taken lightly or automatically maintained. These values must continue to be instilled, taught, and internalized, especially to the younger generation who will determine the direction of the nation in the future.

### **Formulation of the problem:**

1. How can the preservation of Prambanan Temple be a means of internalizing the value of unity?
2. How does the preservation of Prambanan Temple reflect the values of diversity?

### **Research purposes:**

1. Analyzing the role of preserving Prambanan Temple in instilling the value of unity.
2. Examining the contribution of Prambanan Temple preservation in strengthening diversity in a multicultural society.

In this context, cultural heritage such as Prambanan Temple plays a crucial role. Cultural heritage is not merely a physical relic of the past, but also traces of civilization that record the noble values of a society. Prambanan Temple not only demonstrates the architectural splendor and technological advancement of the past, but also illustrates the social, religious, and cultural dynamics of ancient Javanese society living in harmony. Built in the 9th century by the Hindu Sanjaya Dynasty, this temple complex stands side by side with the Buddhist Sewu Temple, a legacy of the Syailendra Dynasty. The harmony of these two great civilizations demonstrates that tolerance and togetherness are not new ideas, but have been lived and practiced by the ancestors of the Indonesian people for centuries.

The preservation of Prambanan Temple cannot be viewed solely from a physical perspective. Furthermore, preserving cultural heritage must be part of a character education process, namely by exploring and instilling the values contained within it. Prambanan Temple conveys messages of cross-community cooperation, respect for different beliefs, and the magnanimity of spirit in building something that is not only physically monumental but also spiritually and culturally meaningful. Internalizing these values is highly relevant amidst the nation's current challenges, where intolerance and exclusivism often emerge in various forms, both in the physical world and in the digital space.

Furthermore, preserving cultural sites like Prambanan Temple is also an important means of strengthening national identity. Amidst globalization and the influx of foreign cultures, society, especially the younger generation, needs to firmly ground itself in its own cultural roots. Strengthening cultural identity is not intended to isolate oneself from the outside world, but rather to serve as a foundation for healthy and equal dialogue with other cultures. Through an educational approach, temple preservation can serve as a means to introduce the values of unity and diversity to schoolchildren, university students, and the general public in a more contextual and down-to-earth manner.

It's also crucial to consider how educational institutions, the government, and civil society can collaborate in this preservation process. Preservation efforts that involve public participation will foster a greater sense of ownership of the nation's cultural heritage. For example, educational tourism programs, arts and cultural activities in temple areas, and digital campaigns on the importance of preserving diversity can be effective strategies for strengthening these values. In this way, cultural preservation will not stop at conservation activities but will also

become a social movement that targets the nation's collective consciousness. Therefore, this paper aims to examine in more depth how the preservation of Prambanan Temple can serve as a means of internalizing the values of unity and diversity. The focus is not only on the physical and historical aspects of the temple, but also on how the values contained within it can be transformed into the lives of Indonesian society today. By exploring the cultural significance of temple preservation and linking it to contemporary social conditions, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the discourse on culture-based national character development and strengthen national integration through a more contextual, reflective, and participatory approach.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen to illustrate the cultural meaning and social values inherent in the preservation of Prambanan Temple as a world cultural heritage. The research focuses on how the internalization of the values of unity and diversity is reflected through the preservation of the temple and the activities of the surrounding community. Data sources were obtained through direct observation at Prambanan Temple during a campus study tour to Yogyakarta, as well as literature review of relevant books, journals, articles, and digital documents. Data validity was maintained through triangulation, which involves comparing observational findings with the literature. Qualitative analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The entire process was conducted collaboratively by research members to generate a comprehensive and contextual understanding.

The data sources for this study were obtained through direct observation of Prambanan Temple by a research group during a campus study tour to Yogyakarta the previous week. During the observations, group members noted various important aspects related to the temple's physical condition, available educational facilities, visitor interactions, the role of tour guides, and forms of cultural preservation observed in the field. Although conducted as an educational visit, these observations provided a firsthand experience that enriched the data collection process. In addition to field observations, the group also conducted a literature review using various written sources, such as books, scientific journals, news articles, and digital documents relevant to the themes of cultural preservation, character education, and the values of diversity in the context of Indonesian society. A data triangulation approach was used to ensure the validity of the findings by comparing field data and literature references.

The data obtained was then analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted collaboratively by all group members to produce a comprehensive, critical, and contextual understanding of the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a means of instilling the values of unity and diversity. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for in-depth depiction of the cultural meanings and social values inherent in the preservation of Prambanan Temple as a world cultural heritage. The primary focus of this research is how the internalization of the values of unity and diversity is reflected through temple preservation efforts and the activities of the surrounding community. The data sources for this study were obtained through direct observation of Prambanan Temple by a research group during a campus study tour to Yogyakarta the previous week. During the observations, group members noted various important aspects related to the temple's physical condition, available educational facilities, visitor interactions, the role of tour guides, and forms of cultural preservation observed in the field. Although conducted as an educational visit, these observations provided a firsthand experience that enriched the data collection process.

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not only a formal academic activity but also a reflective and collaborative process that strengthened understanding of national values through direct experience in the field. The data sources for this study were obtained through direct observation of Prambanan Temple by a research group during a campus study tour to Yogyakarta the previous week. During the observations, group members noted various important aspects related to the temple's physical condition, available educational facilities, visitor interactions, the role of tour guides, and forms of cultural preservation observed in the field. Although conducted as an educational visit, these observations provided a firsthand experience that enriched the data collection process. In addition to field observations, the group also conducted a literature review using various written sources, such as books, scientific journals, news articles, and digital documents relevant to the themes of cultural preservation, character education, and the values of diversity in the context of Indonesian society. A data triangulation approach was used to ensure the validity of the findings by comparing field data and literature references.

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### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 1. RESULTS**

Observations at Prambanan Temple show that site preservation extends beyond physical restoration to educational purposes. Information boards, an interactive museum, and tour guides explain the temple's cultural and historical significance. The diverse interaction between visitors, from schoolchildren to international tourists, demonstrates that Prambanan serves as a space for cross-cultural learning. Furthermore, observations revealed the role of security officers, cleaners, and site managers in maintaining order in the area. Public facilities such as parking areas, prayer rooms, restrooms, and access for people with disabilities demonstrate that Prambanan Temple's management is geared toward inclusiveness and visitor-friendliness. Another aspect observed was the digitalization of tourist information systems, including an official app and QR code boards, that facilitate tourist access to the temple's history, demonstrating modernization in cultural preservation.

We also noted the presence of visitors from various regions and countries. Many groups of elementary and secondary school students used this activity as part of their educational curriculum. International tourists, particularly from Europe and Asia, appeared very enthusiastic about the guides' explanations of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy engraved on the temple's reliefs. This kind of social interaction demonstrates that Prambanan serves as a truly multicultural learning space. Prambanan Temple is also located in the same area as Sewu Temple. The coexistence of Hinduism and Buddhism within the same complex symbolizes harmony and tolerance. This demonstrates that attitudes toward diversity have been deeply rooted since ancient times. This finding reinforces Sedyawati's assertion that cultural heritage reflects the social dynamics of a society.

Observations show that the distance of only a few hundred meters between Prambanan and Sewu makes it natural for visitors to visit both. There are no boundaries or segregation, but rather a connected historical narrative. The reliefs in Prambanan, rich with Ramayana stories, combine with the Buddhist religious atmosphere of Sewu Temple, conveying a message of complementary diversity of beliefs. This situation demonstrates that intercultural harmony is not merely an abstract idea, but has been practiced since the time of the ancient Javanese kingdoms. Furthermore, several cultural festivals held in this area, such as the Prambanan Festival, showcase the arts of various ethnic groups across Indonesia. For example, in addition to the Ramayana performance, regional dances and traditional music from various regions are also featured, demonstrating the spirit of cultural pluralism revived in the modern era. The Ramayana Ballet performance, batik workshop, and educational programs at Prambanan serve as a platform for instilling the values of unity and diversity. These activities shape the character of the younger



generation in a fun way. The values embodied in these performances also align with the concept of character education based on local wisdom.

Educational experiences aren't limited to performances. Museums in the Prambanan area offer historical documentation, temple models, and documentaries explaining the temple's construction and restoration process. Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality (AR/VR) technology has also been introduced, allowing visitors to see the temple's original appearance before it was damaged. This innovation is crucial for attracting the interest of the younger generation and strengthening the transfer of cultural knowledge. Furthermore, cultural education activities in Prambanan align with the concept of multicultural education developed by Haryanto (2021). Multicultural education not only teaches tolerance but also fosters critical awareness of the importance of diversity as a foundation for national unity. This is reflected in the enthusiasm of students conducting observations and research in the area, including the campus study tour that formed the basis for this journal's research.

Observations also revealed a large number of visitors from diverse backgrounds mingling in the temple area. This confirms that cultural heritage serves as a unifying space for the nation. Local community participation through MSMEs and performing arts supports Rahardjo's (2015) view that cultural heritage is a living national identity. Local community involvement is evident in the diverse economic activities integrated into the tourist areas, from souvenir sales and traditional culinary offerings to local transportation services. Furthermore, local artists are given the opportunity to perform at cultural events, which not only enrich the tourist experience but also provide direct economic benefits to the surrounding community. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of sustainable cultural tourism. Prambanan Temple, in this context, is not only a historical site, but also a social space that unites diverse identities. The intercultural interactions occurring within the temple complex demonstrate how the values of diversity can be put into practice, thus serving as an important medium of reflection for modern society in addressing issues of intolerance.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

Field observations show that the preservation of Prambanan Temple encompasses physical, social, educational, and economic aspects. Conceptually, this supports the view that Pancasila is the foundation of Indonesian unity. Prambanan preservation serves as a medium for internalizing the third principle of Pancasila, the Unity of Indonesia, which is realized not only through historical narratives but also in the practical practice of social interactions. From a multicultural perspective, the harmony between Prambanan and Sewu Temples supports Kymlicka's (2007) idea, which emphasizes the need to recognize the cultural rights of groups in a multicultural nation. The coexistence of Hinduism and Buddhism in the past has inspired contemporary practices of tolerance, which are increasingly important amidst increasing identity polarization.

Globally, the preservation of Prambanan Temple demonstrates its relevance in the context of globalization. Ritzer (2010) explains that globalization brings challenges to cultural homogenization, but sites like Prambanan serve as bastions of local identity, reinforcing Indonesia's uniqueness in the eyes of the world. The presence of international tourists learning about the value of diversity at Prambanan demonstrates how local culture can be part of the global dialogue. From an educational perspective, the existence of educational activities such as Ramayana performances and cultural workshops aligns with the multicultural education model. This type of education not only instills tolerance but also fosters a sense of belonging to the national culture. This is reinforced by Anderson's (2006) view of the nation as an "imagined community" united by shared symbols. Prambanan Temple, with all its cultural activities, serves as a collective symbol that strengthens national identity.

The participation of local communities in maintaining and managing the area also demonstrates the importance of a participatory approach to cultural preservation. The Directorate General of Culture (2020) emphasized that cultural preservation will not be successful without active community involvement. This aligns with field findings, where local residents participate as guides, vendors, and artists, creating a sustainable cycle between cultural preservation and community well-being. Furthermore, Prambanan's preservation can also be viewed from the perspective of cultural democracy. Zakaria (2020) asserts that diversity is the foundation of Indonesian democracy. In this regard, Prambanan serves as a public space that represents cultural democracy, where diverse identities can meet, interact, and respect each other. The discussion can also be expanded by examining the role of technology in preservation. Digitizing information, using tourism apps, and utilizing AR/VR not only enhances the visitor experience but also ensures cultural knowledge is accessible to younger generations living in

the digital age. This aligns with Moleong's (2017) concept of modernizing cultural preservation, which argues that new methods of managing cultural heritage are essential to maintaining its relevance amidst changing times.

From a national identity perspective, the preservation of Prambanan Temple helps strengthen the collective imagination of Indonesians as a diverse yet united nation. Budiman (2019) emphasized that culture plays a significant role in building a strong national identity. Therefore, Prambanan can be seen as a tangible symbol of unity that speaks not only at the local level, but also at the national and global levels. Finally, when linked to contemporary challenges such as intolerance and political polarization, Prambanan can serve as a model for practicing tolerance that can be replicated in social life. Liliweri (2005) explains that prejudice and conflict often arise from a society's inability to understand differences. By using Prambanan as an example of cultural harmony, the values of diversity can be more concretely internalized in Indonesian society today. Thus, the discussion of the observation results shows that preserving Prambanan Temple can strengthen the values of unity and diversity through various dimensions: education, social, economic, political, cultural, and technological. This temple is not only important as a world heritage site but also relevant as a living space that unites the current generation with the nation's cultural roots.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The preservation of Prambanan Temple is not merely a physical conservation effort, but also a means of internalizing the values of unity and diversity, encompassing social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and even technological dimensions. Based on observations and analysis, it can be concluded that Prambanan serves as a true multicultural learning space, a place where diverse cultural identities can meet, engage in dialogue, and respect each other. Socially, Prambanan Temple has succeeded in becoming an inclusive space for interaction. Visitors from various regions and countries mingle in a harmonious atmosphere, demonstrating that cultural heritage can foster solidarity and erode prejudice. Culturally, the arts performances and festivals held at Prambanan serve to strengthen national identity while celebrating local diversity. This aligns with the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which affirms unity in diversity.

From an educational perspective, Prambanan's educational programs, such as the Ramayana performance, cultural workshops, and interactive museum, have made a significant contribution to shaping the character of the younger generation. The values of tolerance, mutual cooperation, and respect for historical heritage are instilled through contextual and engaging methods. This demonstrates that preserving historical sites can be integrated into the national character education agenda. From a political and cultural perspective, Prambanan is a tangible symbol of cultural democracy, where diverse expressions of identity are given space to coexist. With local community participation in the management of the area, cultural preservation is not solely the responsibility of the state but also a collective movement that strengthens the community's sense of ownership of their national heritage. This aspect demonstrates that successful preservation is inseparable from the active involvement of all stakeholders.

In a global context, Prambanan serves not only as a UNESCO-recognized world heritage site but also as a representation of Indonesia's contribution to the international cultural scene. This site demonstrates how the Indonesian people have been able to maintain their unique identity amidst the tide of globalization that tends to homogenize cultures. Thus, Prambanan serves as both a bastion of identity and a window into the nation's cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, the use of technology in Prambanan management demonstrates that cultural heritage preservation can be aligned with current developments. Innovations such as digital applications, AR/VR, and technology-based tourism information systems strengthen Prambanan's relevance for the younger generation growing up in the digital age.

This demonstrates that cultural preservation is not static, but rather dynamic and adaptive. With all these dimensions in mind, it can be affirmed that the preservation of Prambanan Temple is an example of best practice in preserving, maintaining, and utilizing cultural heritage for the benefit of the nation. Prambanan is not only a beautiful archaeological site, but also a living space that plays a strategic role in building unity, strengthening diversity, educating the younger generation, supporting community welfare, and strengthening Indonesia's position on the global stage. Therefore, efforts to preserve Prambanan Temple must be continuously enhanced with a comprehensive, collaborative, and sustainable approach. This way, the values of unity and diversity embedded in Prambanan will remain alive, relevant, and a source of inspiration for the development of the Indonesian nation now and in the future.

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