



Religious Pluralism and Intercultural Harmony: Exploring Siri' na Pacce and Confucian Values in South Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract. This study examined the ethical interplay between the Bugis-Makassar philosophy Siri' na Pacce and Confucian values of he 和 (harmony) and ren 仁 (humaneness) in sustaining religious pluralism in South Sulawesi. Using qualitative methods through ethnographic observation, interview, and textual analysis, the research found that Siri' na Pacce resonates with ren (仁) in its emphasis on dignity and compassion. At the same time, it embodies he (和) through solidarity and reconciliation practices. These convergences shape inclusive coexistence between the Muslim majority and Chinese Indonesian minority in Makassar. The findings highlight that local wisdom and Confucian ethics collectively foster a model of pluralism that goes beyond tolerance towards active solidarity, offering a Southeast Asian case that contributes to comparative intercultural ethics and pluralism studies.

Keywords: *Siri'na Pacce*, Confucian ethics, Harmony and Humaneness, Pluralism, South Sulawesi

1 Introduction

Indonesia stands as one of the world's most religiously and culturally diverse nations, a reality encapsulated in its national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or Unity in Diversity. This pluralism is not only institutional but also lived and experienced in the everyday interactions of its people. In South Sulawesi, particularly in the city of Makassar, this diversity is embodied in the coexistence of various ethnic and religious communities. Among them, the Bugis-Makassar Muslim majority and Chinese Indonesian residents have maintained longstanding intercultural relations that illustrate how moral values operate as instruments of harmony. Understanding the ethical dimensions that sustain such coexistence is vital for advancing the study of pluralism beyond political or theological frameworks.

The Bugis-Makassar philosophy of *Siri' na Pacce* has long served as the moral compass shaping interpersonal and communal behavior. *Siri'* conveys dignity, honor, and social integrity, while *Pacce* embodies compassion, empathy, and shared humanity [1][4]. Previous research highlights the importance of *Siri' na Pacce* in maintaining social order, promoting legal awareness, and facilitating conflict resolution within Bugis-Makassar society [5]. More recently, scholars such as [4] have explored its theological dimension, describing *Siri' na Pacce* as a foundation for moral solidarity that transcends individual and communal boundaries. These insights confirm that *Siri' na Pacce* remains a living ethical tradition that continues to guide interhuman relations in contemporary South Sulawesi.

Confucian moral philosophy, particularly the principles of *Ren* (仁, humaneness) and *He* (和, harmony)[6], provides a comparable framework for ethical reflection among many Chinese-Indonesians. While formal Confucian institutions are no longer prominent in Makassar, Confucian ethical heritage remains deeply embedded in the cultural and interpersonal conduct of Chinese-Indonesian residents. The value of *Ren* promotes compassion and benevolence as the basis of moral life, while *He* emphasizes balance and social harmony without requiring uniformity [7][9]. Across Southeast Asia, these moral orientations have supported adaptation, cooperation, and mutual respect within multiethnic societies.

Despite the wealth of scholarship on Indonesian pluralism, most studies have centered on state ideology, institutionalized tolerance, and interfaith dialogue (Latief, 2021). While valuable, these approaches often overlook the subtle role of lived ethics, the everyday moral practices that enable individuals and communities to navigate cultural and religious diversity. Moreover, existing studies have tended to treat *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian ethics as separate domains, seldom examining their intersections. This analytical gap limits our understanding of how indigenous and classical Asian moral systems interact in sustaining social cohesion and intercultural harmony in local contexts such as Makassar.

To address this gap, the present study explores the ethical interplay between *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian moral principles (*Ren* and *He*) in promoting religious pluralism and intercultural harmony in South Sulawesi. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach complemented by survey data, the research investigates how these ethical systems are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied in the daily lives of Bugis-Makassar and Chinese-Indonesian residents. The study adopts interpretive anthropology [10], [11] and relational ethics [12], [13] as theoretical frameworks, emphasizing how culture and morality intersect in shaping social relations.

This research lies in its comparative and integrative perspective. By examining *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian ethics side by side, the study reveals how both traditions converge around shared moral ideals, dignity, compassion, and harmony that underpin

intercultural coexistence. In doing so, it redefines pluralism not as passive tolerance but as active moral solidarity, cultivated through empathy and mutual recognition. The findings are expected to contribute to comparative intercultural ethics and to provide a Southeast Asian perspective on how local wisdom can inform global discourses on pluralism, moral coexistence, and peacebuilding.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative ethnographic research design to explore the practice of ethical values in everyday intercultural interaction between the Bugis-Makassar Muslim majority and Confucianism-influenced Chinese-Indonesian citizens living in Makassar, South Sulawesi. An ethnographic study was employed as it provides a close understanding of social meaning and lived moral life in its natural settings. Rather than focusing on abstract doctrines, this research investigates how *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian values are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied in daily social life.

Two complementary strategies were employed:

1. Participant Observation: The researcher participated in religious and cultural events, community dialogues, and social events, observing how ethical values such as *Siri'*, *Pacce*, *Ren*, and *He* were expressed through interpersonal interactions, rituals, and communal activities.
2. Semi-structured Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with residents of Bugis-Makassar and Chinese-Indonesian descent, together with community members and teachers. The interviews explored participants' understanding of dignity, empathy, compassion, and harmony as moral values that shape coexistence in Makassar.

This combination of interview and observation elicited rich, context-specific information on the role of ethical systems as practiced norms that support pluralism and social harmony.

2.2 Theoretical and Analytical Orientation

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Interpretive Anthropology [11] which views culture as a web of meanings that individuals create and interpret through their actions. From this perspective, *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian ethics (*Ren* 仁 and *He* 和) are understood not as fixed doctrines but as moral practices lived out through daily relationships. Additionally, the study employs Relational Ethics [13] which emphasizes empathy, interdependence, and moral responsibility in social life.

This theoretical approach concurs with the *Pacce* dimension of Bugis-Makassar ethics and Confucian *Ren* value, both of which identify compassion and moral sensitivity as paramount in protecting social harmony.

These theoretical traditions constitute a multi-faceted system of interpretation that examines how moral traditions dynamically engage in seeking intercultural harmony and sustaining pluralism in Makassar.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected across neighborhoods and community centers of Makassar, where intercultural engagement is a daily phenomenon. The researcher engaged with participants directly using field observation, informal conversations, and interviews.

1. Participant Observation: The researcher attended cultural ceremonies, community events, and interfaith gatherings to observe how moral values were practiced in real social settings. Field notes documented gestures of respect, acts of cooperation, and expressions of empathy that reflected *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian moral influence.
2. Semi-structured Interviews: Interviews were held with individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds, including religious leaders, educators, and residents. These conversations explored how values of honor (*siri'*), empathy (*pacce*), humaneness (*ren*), and harmony (*he*) shape relationships between communities.

The qualitative data were coded thematically following [14] ethnographic analysis process. Repeating reading, reflection, interpretation, and identification of recurring themes were involved in the process to comprehend how moral values act as frameworks for intercultural cohabitation. Triangulation of interview and observation data ensured credibility and interpretive depth.

2.4 Survey Component

In addition to qualitative observation and interviews, a questionnaire survey was administered to strengthen the empirical dimension of the study. The survey aimed to capture participants' perceptions and experiences concerning *Siri' na Pacce*, Confucian ethical values (*Ren* and *He*), and intercultural harmony in Makassar.

1. Participants: 15 participants completed the survey, including both the dominant Bugis-Makassar and Chinese-Indonesian residents who are exposed to Confucian moral teachings. The participants were diverse in age, gender, and educational background, from secondary to postgraduate. The researcher administered the questionnaires in person during home visits and

- followed this with a talk-through to ensure participant response was interpreted correctly.
2. Instrument Design: The questionnaire instrument combined Likert-scale (1–5) and open-ended questions. The Likert items assessed agreement with statements regarding dignity, empathy, reconciliation, and harmony, while the open-ended questions sought ideas regarding intercultural cooperation and advice on sustaining pluralism. The instrument was designed to operationalize theoretical concepts from Interpretive Anthropology and Relational Ethics, with a focus on how moral values are embodied and internalized in everyday social situations.
 3. Data Analysis: Survey data were analyzed through descriptive statistics to identify general trends and ethical orientations. Mean scores and frequency distributions were calculated for each ethical dimension (*Siri'*, *Pacce*, *Ren*, *He*, and Harmony). Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify recurring ideas such as solidarity, mutual respect, and empathy.

By integrating survey results with ethnographic observations and interviews, the study achieved methodological triangulation, enhancing both the credibility and depth of interpretation.

3 Result and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings derived from ethnographic observation, interviews, and survey data, followed by interpretive analysis in accordance with the theoretical framework. The results are organized thematically, demonstrating how the ethical values of *Siri'*, *Pacce*, *Ren*, and *He* are embodied in everyday interactions and contribute to sustaining intercultural harmony in Makassar.

3.1 Ethical Orientation of Participants

A total of 15 participants representing both Bugis-Makassar and Chinese Indonesian communities took part in the study. Most were between 30 and 45 years old and held educational backgrounds ranging from secondary to postgraduate levels, indicating a mature and reflective understanding of moral principles and social coexistence. Survey results revealed consistently high endorsement of ethical values across both groups. *Siri'* and *Pacce* received strong affirmation among Bugis-Makassar respondents, reflecting steadfast commitment to dignity and empathy, while *Ren* and *He* were especially emphasized by Chinese-Indonesian participants as guiding virtues of compassion and harmonious relations. Overall, moral orientations converged around respect, collective responsibility, and social equilibrium.

3.2 Lived Expression of Moral Coexistence

The qualitative data illustrated that these moral values are practiced not as abstract doctrines, but as concrete social behaviors. Respondents described reciprocal participation during religious festivities such as the Chinese New Year and Eid al-Fitr, shared visits between neighbors, and mutual assistance during times of hardship. One participant noted:

“Although we follow different religions, we still visit each other during Imlek and Idul Fitri, that is part of *siri*’ and our respect as neighbors.”

Another emphasized:

“We help one another in times of difficulty, regardless of ethnicity or religion; what matters is *Pacce*, our sense of humanity.”

Such testimonies demonstrate how *Siri*’ and *Pacce* align with *Ren* and *He*, fostering an ethic of hospitality, mutual care, and social responsibility.

3.3 Convergence of Indigenous and Confucian Ethics

Table 1 presents the mean scores and interpretation of ethical dimensions related to intercultural harmony, based on survey data from the 15 participants.

Table 1. Mean Scores and Interpretation of Ethical Dimensions Related to Intercultural Harmony

Ethical Dimension	Representative Statement	Mean (1–5)	Interpretation
Siri’ (Dignity & Honor)	“I find it important to maintain personal and family dignity in social interactions.”	4.6	Very high commitment to dignity and moral integrity as a personal and communal value.
Pacce (Empathy & Compassion)	“In conflicts, I try to show empathy and consider others’ feelings.”	4.3	Strong sense of emotional awareness and solidarity in managing social relations
Reconciliation Ethic	“I prefer reconciliation to maintain social harmony.”	4.1	Positive orientation toward peaceful conflict resolution and relational repair.

Ren (Humaneness)	"I strive to be compassionate and benevolent in daily life."	4.5	High internalization of benevolence and moral concern for others.
He (Harmony)	"I believe maintaining dignity and respect helps achieve harmony."	4.8	Very strong valuation of harmony as a guiding moral and social ideal.
Active Solidarity	"Tolerance alone is not enough; real solidarity is more important."	4.6	High agreement that pluralism requires active engagement rather than passive coexistence.
Cross-Cultural Participation	"I attend cultural or religious events organized by other communities."	3.3	Moderate participation: respect is high, but practical engagement remains limited.
Perceived Social Harmony	"Relations among different ethnic and religious groups in my area are generally harmonious."	4.7	Strong perception of peaceful and cooperative coexistence within the community.

Thematic analysis revealed a meaningful convergence between Bugis-Makassar and Confucian ethical systems. *Siri'*, with its emphasis on honor and human worth, resonates with *Ren*, which foregrounds empathy and benevolence. Similarly, *Pacce* rooted in emotional sensitivity and collective suffering, parallels *He*, the Confucian pursuit of balance and social harmony. Participants identified these shared values as essential in conflict resolution, communal cooperation, and sustaining neighborly relations. Survey responses reinforced these insights, highlighting solidarity, reconciliation, and mutual respect as foundational elements of pluralism in Makassar.

The findings presented in **Table 1** align closely with the theoretical perspectives of Interpretive Anthropology, which views ethical values as lived cultural practices rather than abstract doctrines [11]. The high mean scores for *Siri'* (4.6), *Pacce* (4.3), *Ren* (4.5), and *He* (4.8) indicate that moral concepts such as dignity, empathy, and harmony are actively interpreted and embodied in daily social life among Bugis-Makassar and Chinese Indonesian communities. These ethical orientations serve as "cultural scripts" that guide interpersonal behavior and communal relations, illustrating how local moral systems shape intercultural coexistence. Participants' emphasis on statements such as "I find it important to maintain personal and family dignity in social interactions" and "I believe maintaining dignity and respect helps achieve harmony" suggests that both indigenous and Confucian moral frameworks

converge to form a shared ethical understanding of respect, balance, and collective well-being.

From the perspective of Relational Ethics [12] the values of *Pacce* and *Ren* reflect a moral orientation grounded in empathy, compassion, and interdependence. The statement “In conflicts, I try to show empathy and consider others’ feelings” (Mean = 4.3) captures this relational sensitivity that underpins social harmony. Likewise, participants’ agreement that “Tolerance alone is not enough; real solidarity is more important” (Mean = 4.6) supports the argument that pluralism in Makassar extends beyond tolerance toward active moral solidarity. The relatively lower score for Cross-Cultural Participation (3.3) reveals the remaining gap between moral intention and practical engagement, yet the high Perceived Social Harmony (4.7) indicates that mutual trust and recognition persist. Overall, the findings affirm that pluralism in South Sulawesi is not merely institutional or political but deeply ethical, sustained through lived moral practices rooted in local wisdom and relational interdependence.

Table 2. Thematic Insights from Open-Ended Responses and Inte

Emerging Theme	Illustrative Participant Comment	Interpretive Category
Mutual Support & Cooperation	“We help neighbors of different faiths during their celebrations.”	Every day, the moral practice of <i>Pacce</i> and <i>Ren</i> .
Shared Cultural Celebration	“I joined my Chinese friend’s Mid-Autumn Festival and invited them to Eid.”	Expression of <i>He</i> (Harmony) through social participation.
Conflict Mediation	“Community elders usually mediate and remind everyone of <i>siri</i> ’ and respect.”	Reconciliation and moral negotiation.
Moral Education & Youth	“We need more cultural education for the younger generation.”	Ethical continuity and intergenerational transmission.
Active Pluralism	“Tolerance is not enough; we must cooperate and do things together.” <i>harmony</i> .”	Ethical transformation from tolerance to solidarity.

As shown in **Table 2**, the findings indicate that intercultural harmony in Makassar is practiced through everyday ethics of empathy, cooperation, and respect. Statements like “We help neighbors of different faiths” and “Tolerance is not enough; we must cooperate and do things together” reflect the lived values of *Siri’ na Pacce*, *Ren*, and *He*. These results align, showing that pluralism in South Sulawesi is sustained not by formal structures but through moral solidarity and continuous ethical engagement in daily life.

3.4 Pluralism as Moral Solidarity

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings indicates that pluralism in Makassar transcends passive tolerance. Instead, it is practiced as moral solidarity, marked by active participation in others' lives, voluntary cooperation, and mutual protection. Respondents emphasized that harmony is not maintained through legal obligation or institutional policy, but through everyday moral gestures visiting, assisting, empathizing, and recognizing one another's dignity. This reveals a lived pluralism rooted in ethical action rather than formal rhetoric.

3.5 Interpretive and Theoretical Implications

From the perspective of Interpretive Anthropology, these values act as cultural scripts that guide behavior and interaction within plural settings. Rather than being externally imposed, *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian ethics are continuously negotiated and internalized in daily social practice. Through the lens of Relational Ethics, the emphasis on care, empathy, and interdependence becomes central to sustaining social bonds. The intersection of *Siri'*, *Pacce*, *Ren*, and *He* thus suggests a comparative moral paradigm grounded in Asian traditions, proposing a redefinition of pluralism not as ideological coexistence, but as active ethical engagement.

4 Conclusion

This research demonstrates that religious pluralism in Makassar is sustained not merely through institutional arrangements or formal tolerance, but through deeply rooted moral traditions that guide everyday interactions. The ethical convergence between *Siri' na Pacce* and Confucian values (*Ren* and *He*) reveals a shared commitment to dignity, empathy, and harmony that transcends cultural and religious boundaries.

By highlighting how indigenous Bugis-Makassar ethics intersect with classical Asian moral philosophy, this study contributes to a broader understanding of pluralism as a form of moral solidarity. It positions Indonesia, particularly South Sulawesi, as a significant contributor to the global discourse on ethical coexistence. Rather than exporting political models, Indonesia offers a moral paradigm grounded in care, mutual recognition, and lived intercultural respect.

The findings invite further reflection on how local wisdom can inform global peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue. In a world marked by rising polarization, the lived practices of *Siri' na Pacce* in dialogue with *Ren* and *He* provide a compelling example of how ethical traditions can sustain unity amidst diversity.

Acknowledgments. The author gratefully acknowledges the institutional support provided by Hasanuddin University, Indonesia, and Hunan Normal University, China. Appreciation is extended to the faculty members of the Chinese Language and Culture Study Program at Hasanuddin University and the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Hunan Normal University for their insightful discussions and academic encouragement. The author also wishes to express

gratitude to academic reviewers whose constructive feedback substantially improved the quality of this manuscript.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper..

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