

Tongkonan: Symbol of Interfaith Peace in Tana Toraja South Sulawesi

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Abstrak

Minimnya kajian yang menelaah secara mendalam proses sosial pembentukan budaya damai dalam masyarakat multireligius berbasis nilai lokal menjadi celah penting dalam literatur studi lintas agama di Indonesia. Selama ini, harmoni antarumat beragama sering dipandang sebagai kondisi statis, bukan hasil dari interaksi sosial yang terus dibentuk dan dirawat. Padahal, di tengah meningkatnya intoleransi beragama secara nasional, pengalaman masyarakat Tana Toraja, Sulawesi Selatan, menawarkan alternatif pendekatan berbasis kearifan lokal yang layak dikaji lebih jauh. Tujuannya adalah untuk menjelaskan kondisi struktural dan kultural yang mencakup nilai atau identitas bersama, peran elit pemuka agama dan keterlibatan masyarakat. Penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian literatur dengan mengandalkan data jurnal, majalah dan berita. Studi ini memfokuskan pada bagaimana warga lintas iman di Tana Toraja bisa hidup bersama dalam kondisi damai? Bagaimana perubahan sosial yang mengancam budaya damai dan cara memperkuat atau mereproduksi budaya damai?. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kondisi budaya damai di Toraja melalui keterlibatan masyarakat dalam kegiatan keagamaan antar agama yang berbeda. Nilai-nilai bersama melalui keberadaan Tongkonan (rumah adat Toraja) yang menjadi rumah bersama bagi keluarga yang berbeda agama. Peran elit pemimpin (adat dan agama) dalam mengontrol dinamika dalam hubungan antar lintas iman. Juga hubungan ekonomi antar agama yang didapat melalui keragaman budaya mereka. Serta artikel ini menyarankan pentingnya mereproduksi nilai-nilai kekeluargaan sebagai nilai utama dalam merawat budaya damai yang ada di Tana Toraja. Terakhir agar pesan leluhur “*siangga, sikamali na siangkarran*” (saling menghargai, saling merindukan dan saling tolong menolong) dapat selalu diimplementasikan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

Kata Kunci: *Lintas Iman, Perdamaian, Tana Toraja, Tongkonan*

Abstract (gunakan style Satya Widya_judul abstrak bahasa inggris)

The lack of studies that examine in depth the social process of forming a culture of peace in a multireligious society based on local values is an important gap in the literature of interfaith studies in Indonesia. So far, interfaith harmony is often seen as a static condition, not the result of social interactions that continue to be formed and maintained. In fact, in the midst of increasing religious intolerance nationally, the experience of the people of Tana Toraja, South

Sulawesi, offers an alternative approach based on local wisdom that deserves further study. The aim is to explain structural and cultural conditions that include shared values or identity, the role of elite religious leaders, and community involvement. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review approach that relies on journal, magazine, and news data. This study focuses on how interfaith residents in Tana Toraja can live together in peaceful conditions. What social changes threaten the culture of peace, and how to strengthen or reproduce the culture of peace?. The study results show a culture of peace in Toraja through community involvement in religious activities between different religions. Shared values through the existence of a Tongkonan (Toraja traditional house), a shared home for families of different religions. The role of elite leaders (traditional and religious) in controlling the dynamics in inter-faith relations. Also, economic relations between religions are obtained through their cultural diversity. This article also suggests the importance of reproducing family values as the principal value in caring for a culture of peace in Tana Toraja. Lastly, order the leluhut "siangga, sikamali na siangkarran " (mutual respect, longing for each other, and helping each other) can consistently be implemented in everyday life.

Keyword: *Interfaith, Peace, Tana Toraja, Tongkonan*

Introduction

Indonesia, as a multicultural country, is a priceless gift. However, it also causes conflicts between religious communities in various regions of Indonesia, such as religious intolerance. Since 2013, the number of intolerant people in Indonesia has continued to increase so that it can be said to be a "red report card in the life of religious people" (Qodir, 2017, p. 33). For example, the suicide bombing in front of the cathedral church in Makassar, South Sulawesi (Kompas.com, 2021). In addition, acceptance of the *Tolotang* local belief in Sidrap, South Sulawesi, continues to cause conflict and discrimination because of the state's partiality towards certain religions (Jubba, 2016). This illustrates that the attitude of intolerance in South Sulawesi is still developing and has become a big problem among religious communities because it is still widely discussed.

The fundamental problem that causes intolerance is the inability to accommodate local culture. Culture is often opposed to religion, so the view is that Islam is Arab and Christianity is European. Problems related to intolerance towards religious people in a pluralistic society cannot be pointed out because it is an issue that leads to one belief (*Santalia & Aulia, 2022, p. 2*). In society, some groups limit themselves to local values because they consider them heretical and left behind. In short, local values are considered contrary to religious teachings.

This phenomenon differs from the interfaith community in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi. They have a unique reality, namely the sociocultural values that make up a harmonious and harmonious society (Umar, 2019, p. 329). However, studies that specifically analyze the reproduction of a culture of peace in the context of social change are still limited.

The Toraja people live in the Tana Toraja Regency, which is in the mountainous area of the northern part of South Sulawesi (Baan et al., 2022, p. 1). The participation of interfaith citizens in building a culture of peace can be seen through the values of togetherness, inclusivity, and mutual understanding.

Research on the culture of peace in Tana Toraja already exists and has addressed various aspects such as the life values of peace and tolerance, the reality of peace amid religious diversity, and the role of customs and traditions in building religious moderation. For example, some studies examine the value of peace and tolerance in Toraja that contributes to religious harmony and harmonious social life (Sanderan et al., 2022; Welem, 2023). In addition, other studies highlight how customs such as the Rambu Solo' ceremony and the philosophy of Tongkonan local wisdom are important foundations in maintaining religious harmony and moderation in Toraja society (Sakti, 2023; Yunus & Mukoyyaroh, 2022).

Casram explained that ideal cross-faith relations must be built through the active participation of adherents of religions (Casram, 2016, p. 187). This study aims to analyze the culture of peace in Tana Toraja Regency. The first analysis is about the conditions of inter-faith peace, such as; shared values, community involvement, and elite roles in Tana Toraja. Second, social changes that occur in society threaten the culture of peace and how to reproduce it to strengthen the changing culture of peace.

Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative research with a literature study approach. A literature study was conducted to analyze several references or previous studies related to this research. Data sources are obtained from primary and secondary sources; primary sources are scientific references such as journals, books, and news websites. In comparison, secondary sources are obtained through articles from magazines and other materials that can provide information related to this study. Data analysis techniques were conducted through thematic content analysis, by identifying and categorizing the main themes from the literature sources, such as peace values, cultural symbols, and the role of local elites. Data were analyzed inductively to explore the contextual meanings and social patterns that emerge in narratives about interfaith harmony in Tana Toraja.

Uses the theory of community involvement, shared values, and elite integration (Ahnaf, 2020; Varshney, 2002) and the concepts of social change and cultural reproduction (Ahnaf, 2020). The author tries to show that peaceful inter-faith engagement relations between the majority (Christian) and minority (Islamic and ancestral religions) religions can find common ground through the standard house and the role of the traditional head. In this article, the author

describes the conditions of interfaith relations in Tana Toraja, which have succeeded in instilling a peaceful coexistence. This research argues that it is essential to show symbols of a culture of peace in an interfaith society. The shared values between cross-faith in Tana Toraja, namely the symbol of a shared house (Tongkonan), do not only function as a place to live as usual. Instead, it becomes a shared home between interfaith faiths and a home for resolving conflicts that occur in society.

Discussion

Portrait of Peaceful Culture Conditions in Toraja Society

Tana Toraja is a city that is not only famous for its tourism area but also inter-faith harmony. The Toraja tribe is a minority ethnic group in South Sulawesi compared to the Makassar and Bugis tribes (Baan et al., 2022, p. 2). Torajans (*Torayaan*) mostly adhere to Christianity (including Protestantism and Catholicism). However, there is also a local religion called *Aluk To Dolo*, which is still adhered to by several community groups (Manurung, 2017, p. 112; Said, 2004, p. 33). The government considers these local beliefs part of the Hindu religion, so they are familiarly called Hindu Toraja. Besides these two, some people adhere to Islam. However, this interfaith community in Toraja has never been involved in a significant conflict caused by religion. This is because the community still closely maintains local wisdom in Toraja.

The value of the participation of the Toraja people in their daily life is a form of local wisdom passed down from generation to generation by their ancestors. Inheritance can be in the form of objects (tangible) or immaterial (intangible) (Sawaludin et al., 2022, p. 2428). This immaterial value is illustrated through friendly relations, mutual assistance in agricultural activities, and even involvement in constructing other houses of faith. In his observations Umar (2019) illustrates that the people of Tana Toraja do not question religious identity in their daily lives. At the same time, the inheritance of objects is in the form of traditional Toraja houses, namely Tongkonan, which is a unifier for the Toraja people.

Community Engagement

Local wisdom values can be found through community involvement in daily activities. Such is the case in Tana Toraja, even though most Torajans are Christians. However, minorities are always involved in existing activities. The following activities describe the relationship of community involvement held by the Toraja people. First, the construction of houses of worship is a joint work. A case in the Garassik valley, Tondok Garontin, Gandangbatu District in Sillanan, Tana Toraja, is where a mosque and church were built side by side by the community independently (Umar, 2019, p. 330). The construction process of the two houses of worship

was based on mutual assistance between the two congregations in terms of funding and construction. This is possible because religious differences in society are commonplace for them.

Second, Gotong royong is still very strong to do. For example, in farming, the Toraja people will help each other during the season of planting rice or planting rice. Muslim and Christian rice field owners are not distinguished at all. They always help each other (*Sabaruddin & Rahman, 2018, p. 10*). Agriculture is a medium in spreading religious tolerance because all people meet and help each other. Informal interaction allows for intimate conversations to strengthen inter-faith interactions.

The third civic engagement in Toraja can be found in the Celebration of Christian and Islamic holy days. They also have an event agenda made by the Regional Government of Tana Toraja, which has a philosophical value, namely Lovely December in Toraja. As for the activity, all Toraja culture, including Christianity and Islam, was staged, such as; the coffee festival, qasida festival, tedong festival, ecumenical Christmas celebration, and fireworks festival (*Santalia & Aulia, 2022, p. 86*). The local government supports this activity with all layers of religious leaders in Tana Toraja.

Varshney (2002) states that such inter-communal relations must coexist peacefully. Civil society must be involved in the relationship. The term often used by Varshney is "civil engagement" to refer to the urgency of formal and informal relations within a community (Ahnaf, 2020, p. 30; Varshney, 2002, p. 281). Community involvement is practiced in the daily life of the Toraja people because it implements their noble values.

Tongkonan as a Shared Home

Talking about the Toraja tribe, of course, in our minds, we imagine an ethnic tribe that has a large stilt house with a roof resembling the nose of a boat with traditional ceremonies involving many people. The community of Tana Toraja people practices inter-faith harmony well, one of which is a form of local wisdom that has been upheld and closely maintained by them, namely Tongkonan (Tangdialla et al., 2023). Tongkonan is not only a traditional house for the Toraja people. More than that, Tongkonan is a typical home for them to gather and discuss between families. Several studies have shown that Tongkonan functions as a unifying tool for families in all social and cultural activities of the Torajan people. Tongkonan becomes a place where families gather, interact, and solve problems together, thus strengthening family ties and togetherness. The basis of Torajan fellowship is flesh and blood or *rara buku* symbolized by Tongkonan, making it a symbol of family greatness and identity as well as the

center of customary and cultural activities, including important deliberations and discussions within the community (Tangdialla et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2022).

The meaning of brotherhood among Christians, Muslims, and local religions in Tana Toraja is also strengthened and influenced by marriage relations between families of different religions. In one family, there are even those who embrace different religions; there are Christians, Muslims, and Indigenous religions (Umar, 2019, p. 33). The history of mutual tolerance in Toraja society is unquestionable. Radjab's research (2020) on the four families he interviewed shows that their parents do not always determine the religion of children born in interfaith marriages. Some parents give freedom to choose their religion or by agreement. Adults have the right to choose their religion without being challenged by family members (Radjab et al., 2020, p. 9).

In understanding the Toraja people (Torayaan), their kinship system is united in a kinship knot in Tongkonan. The function of the Tongkonan is to become a gathering place and a unifier in dealing with all forms of activities in family matters. For the Tongkonan community, it is not only limited to traditional buildings but functions as a source of values, norms, and implementation of decisions within the family or relatives (Nur et al., 2021, p. 2). Each family has a communal house that was built jointly by clan members. Wherever he is, however, far he goes, he is attached to his tongkonan.

Family values turn into social values because, in Toraja society, they recognize the kinship system up to the seventh layer and are still considered brothers (Nooy-Palm, 1986; Pelras, 1997). They are all bound by a shared value, namely Tongkonan. People outside Tana Toraja generally only know Tongkonan as a traditional house. More than that, Tongkonan is a system of family institutions symbolized by a traditional building. The central function of Tongkonan as a family institution has been discussed in many studies. Muttaqin (2023) asserts that Tongkonan acts as the center of decision-making and the place of deliberation of the extended family, as well as a symbol of a very broad kinship bond. Similarly, (Wong et al., 2022) and Koengtjaraningrat (1967) also reveal that Tongkonan is the core of the Torajan social system, where family values are internalized and manifested in daily social life. (Alan M et al., (2024) even mentions Tongkonan as the center of all social, cultural, and spiritual activities that bind the kinship of the Toraja people.

The kinship united by the Tongkonan knot causes the Toraja people always to foster a sense of kinship between people. This characterizes the Toraja people's personality because every community member knows and has a Tongkonan to protect and inherit their local wisdom (Tangdilintin, 1980, p. 181; Umar, 2019, p. 337). It is not surprising that in Tongkonan,

several symbols, such as crosses, calligraphy, or tofu (statues), exist in one house. This relationship makes Toraja people accustomed to interacting with different religions and tribes. All family members in the Tongkonan ceremony will always participate even though they have different religions because they see their clan.

Indigenous and Religious Leaders Elite Group

Elite groups in a community are needed to build peaceful inter-faith relations. According to Tadjoeeddin (2004), elite integration is expected to bridge the gap between two or more communities. Elite integration is expected to contribute significantly to inter-community prevention (Ahnaf, 2020, p. 35; Tadjoeeddin, 2004, p. 7). The importance of elite integration is evident in Toraja society. In Toraja, even though the majority of the people are Christians, still in a society Muslims are entrusted as customary heads (Sudarmin, 2021). This is commonly done in society and is not contested because the community requested it.

Another example is during the celebration of the inauguration of the Catholic Church. Even though the activity was organized by Christians, the chairman of the committee was believed to be from Islam. The process of slaughtering animals such as; Chickens, Buffaloes, and Goats use Islamic law by the local imam (Umar, 2019, p. 323). An agreement has been made that those who slaughter halal animals, such as buffalo and goats, are Muslims because they understand that in Islamic law, it is obligatory to cut it by reading *Basmalah*.

There are two separate locations at the wedding reception for entertaining guests. One location is designated for the Muslim community, which is managed and served by Muslim women. In the Rambu Solo ritual, do not slaughter pigs because most of the deceased's family are Muslims (detik.com, 2022). It is also not disputed by custom. Every Toraja person is equipped with a message for

na pomelo to sangrapu tallang, na pobalo' to sangkaponan ao' iana rannuanna to sangrapu (bringing goodness to people all over the bamboo family, becoming the foundation of hope for the allied family), they are also equipped with the message of umpesalai kakadakean tu la urrampoi to senga' ' (avoiding harm that will befall others) (Umar, 2019, p. 338).

By allowing Muslims to slaughter animals, they avoid the dangers that befall their brothers. This shows an attitude of solidarity in Toraja society. If they want, they can deceive their brothers by giving pork which is haram for Muslims. Nevertheless, that was not done because it adheres to life principles that have been around for generations.

These tolerance values result from the agreement of traditional local leaders, which have been arranged in such a way and passed down from generation to generation. Without the

support of local elite leaders, no form of civic engagement in Toraja exists today. These elites convened a joint deliberation to decide something in Tongkonan. Through traditional and religious leaders, peaceful cultural values can still be present in Toraja.

Cultural Wealth: Economic Relations

Tana Toraja, as an area located in the mountains, coupled with cultural wealth, attracts many tourists. Tongkonan areas, stone tombs, and traditional ceremonies of death are performed. The impact is enormous on the economic quality of life of the Toraja people. Tongkonan, owned by the family, can be rented out for tourists to visit (Jayadi & Abduh, 2022, pp. 83–84). Likewise, the death party which gathers relatives to open livelihoods for the Toraja people. Opening a halal restaurant is very profitable for Muslims because most tourists who come are Muslim. Meanwhile, there are many opportunities for Christians and indigenous religions to trade and sell souvenirs such as clothes and sarongs. Some choose to become guides. These local wisdom values have built economic relations among religious communities.

Threats to Social Change and Reproductive Capacity

The development of the times does not rule out the possibility of social change in society. The author tries to find many sources related to the case of intolerance in Tana Toraja. However, no digital traces were found. In a journal, it was described that there had been conflicts or small ripples due to land affairs that occurred misunderstandings in the construction of mosques. However, being able to be reconciled and not exaggerated because it is considered not a religious problem (Umar, 2019, p. 333). Once again, the role of elite leaders is needed to overcome minor conflicts.

Then how do people maintain this culture of peace? First, family relationships. This family bond is also experienced by the Toraja people, who have a lineage-based kinship. Heredity is a factor in creating harmony between different faiths in Toraja society. As the saying goes in Toraja society, *“la'bi proud that is it rara na ia aluk”* which means “more valuable bonds of brotherhood/kinship than religion” (Umar, 2019, p. 338). Family ties are more valuable to the Toraja people than religious ties. Second, local values as hereditary media. To reproduce a culture of peace within Toraja society, customs are used as a hereditary medium to spread this culture of peace. Ancestral message for *Singga, sikamali na siangkarra* (appreciate each other, miss each other, and help each other). Third, social solidarity in Toraja society must be maintained. Help each other in the construction of houses of worship. Assisting without being asked is an attitude that must be maintained to build a culture of peace.

Conclusion

This research shows that interfaith people in Tana Toraja are able to coexist in a peaceful atmosphere through the application of local wisdom values reflected in the Tongkonan symbol. Tongkonan not only functions as a traditional house, but also a symbol of togetherness, a place for discussion, and a medium for interfaith reconciliation. The active involvement of the community and the integration of the roles of traditional and religious leaders have strengthened the interfaith harmony.

However, social changes that occur, such as modernization and shifting values, have the potential to threaten the preservation of the peaceful culture that has been built. Therefore, it is important to continue reproducing the family and traditional values of Tongkonan as the main foundation for maintaining peace. This effort must be supported by active community participation and the strategic role of local elites so that the interfaith culture of peace in Tana Toraja can be maintained and developed in the future.

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