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THE ROLE OF *DALIAN NA TOLU* IN MAINTAINING RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND COHESION IN HUTA DOLOK VILLAGE, MANDAILING NATAL

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HIGHLIGHTS

-Dalian Na Tolu as a traditional kinship system in Mandailing community consists of three elements, namely Mora, Kahanggi and Anak Boru. The approach adopted by Muslims and Christians in Huta Dolok Village in nurturing interreligious harmony through the role of Dalian Na Tolu has so far been notably effective.

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to describe the portrait of religious harmony and the approach adopted by Muslims and Christians in Huta Dolok Village in nurturing a harmonious relationship through the traditional system of Dalian Na Tolu as a pluralist society. This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach with data collection techniques involving observation, interviews, and documentation. Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model was used as the data analysis technique. The results of the study showed that the effort to maintain the interreligious harmony in Huta Dolok Village has so far been carried out by the Muslim-Christian community through the Dalian Na Tolu approach, which constitutes a kinship system in the Mandailing custom consisting of three elements, namely Mora, Kahanggi and Anak Boru. The result also indicated that the efforts to nurture the harmonious Muslim-Christian relationship have been carried out by the residents of Huta Dolok Village by prioritizing four aspects,

namely (a) the relationship in the social aspects, (b) the relationship in the economic aspects, (c) the relationship in the customary aspects, and (d) the relationship in the socio-religious aspects.

KEYWORD

Inter-religious Harmony, *Dalian Na Tolu*, Huta Dolok Village

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A. INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity is a form of pluralism in Indonesia. Diversity can also be seen in the areas of languages, ethnicities and races, all of which are important pillars for the realization of interreligious harmony (Karo & Ginting, 2016). According to Nazmudin (2017), religious harmony is a dynamic process that takes place in line with the growth of a society itself. The fostering of interreligious harmony is an effort made consciously, planned, directed regularly and responsibly by instilling an understanding of community values and life to support interreligious harmony, nurturing a setting and conditions that are able to support attitudes and behaviors that lead to interreligious harmony, as well as fostering and developing attitudes and behaviors that promote interreligious harmony.

Meanwhile, according to Umar and Hakim (2019), interreligious harmony for a pluralist country is actually the main element in the creation of brotherhood and national unity. While, brotherhood, unity, and harmony are highly essential for the realization of development. Consequently, it will apparently be difficult to realize the national development without the creation of a sense of unity and harmony among the citizens.

The issue of interreligious harmony is a necessity in the context of religious diversity in Indonesia (Pratiwi, 2021). For this reason, the issue of religious harmony must be a priority for the citizens to maintain and manage properly. The national harmony has consistently been in a state of fluctuation due to friction between religious adherents (Arifianto, 2021). Relationship among religious adherents from time immemorial have always undergone unstable fluctuations due to social problems caused by such claims that one religious teaching is the most correct, to the point of insulting and belittling others' beliefs, thus giving rise to antipathy (Saefullah, 2011). The problem in inter-religious harmony is always persistent in the life of a society, nation and state. many groups of people still persistently commit acts of intolerance towards certain religious minorities (Muhdina, 2015).

The differences in opinion and religious conceptions, according to Husaini (2004), initially do not automatically give rise to conflict on a practical level. Even throughout history, people of faith have enjoyed living in the periods of peace and harmony longer than the periods of religious conflicts. Throughout the Muslim-Christian conflict, during which the notorious crusade lasting for hundreds of years took place, for example, a number of social relations between Islam and Christianity in Syria remained in operation.

Ironically, the numerous conflicts that arise among religious communities are not only due to religious fundamentalism, but also driven political and economic interests (Atmanto & Muzayanah, 2020). Psychologically, most people of different faith and beliefs have hardly been able to live side by side (Team, 2020). Recently in fact, religious conflicts have also been instigated by the differences in the interpretation of the meaning of social symbols in communication (Azizah, 2021). The ironical incidents have but reinforced the need for the people of faith to practice their religion moderately in accordance with the moderate values of each religion.

Conflicts and disintegration among religious adherents are certainly detrimental to the national stability, including the people of faith themselves. Disharmony, especially conflicts, will certainly have an impact on all aspects of life, including political stability, economic growth, and socio-cultural development. Living in an atmosphere of uncertainty will breed fear and give rise to feelings of distrust (Suryana, 2011).

Therefore, the frequent acts of terrorism and intolerance perpetrated by a particular group in the name of religion have highlighted the need for every believer to practice religious moderation as initiated by the Ministry of Religion. The series of acts of terrorism are evident in such cases as

Therefore, the agenda of religious moderation initiated by the Ministry of Religion is important for every religious adherent to practice because of the emergence of a series of incidents of terrorism and intolerance by a group in the name of religion to justify their actions. The series of acts of terrorism can be seen starting from the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2009 Jakarta Bombings bombings, the 2011 Cirebon bombing, the 2016 Jakarta attacks at the Sarinah shopping mall, the Solo Mapolresta bombing, Melayu Village Bomb Attack (Azanella, 2018) the 2002 Maluku Islands sectarian conflict, and the 2022 attack on Huriah Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) (Rouf, 2020). Adding to the long list of acts of terrorism is church burning in Suka Makmur Gunung Meriah in 2015 and the recent conflict over the establishment of the church in Aceh Singkil in 2015 (Ahmad, 2016). However, Fairusy (2015) insisted that the recent religious frictions are actually not

only instigated by religious factors, but also driven by the various interests of certain individuals.

Religious leaders must promote an attitude of openness to prevailing differences in order to maintain a harmonious relationship (Yanasari, 2021). Nevertheless, the religious moderation echoed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs at this time is arguably too general in nature since it is still limited to the outlines of the basic principles in understanding religions, and has not yet formulated the effective forms, approaches, and strategies in practicing them in the midst of the diversity of religions, cultures and ethnicities of Indonesian society, whereas the model of inter-religious harmony with a local cultural approach is more effective in uniting those with different beliefs beyond their own religious ties (Haryanto, 2014).

Research conducted by Islamy & Makatita (2022) on religious moderation in the tradition of Bakar Batu the Dani Muslim community in Jayawijaya, the results of the research showed that in the practice of the Bakar Batu tradition carried out by the Dani Muslim community in Jayawijaya there is a dimension of tolerance value in realizing inter-religious harmony and a dimension of accommodative value towards local culture in harmonizing religious teachings and local cultural traditions.

This notion was reinforced by Kasmir et al., (2021) who stated that the local Mandailing culture is highly influential in nurturing an attitude of religious moderation, especially among teenagers, to establish harmonious relationships with fellow citizens of different faiths. Therefore, according to Sutrisno & Sugiarto (2022), religious harmony and local wisdom are an integral part of increasing religious moderation.

Thus, research on the role of *Dalian Na Tolu* in a pluralist local community serves as a social cohesive in maintaining a harmonious relationship among the people of different faiths. In this case, the research was conducted on the people of Huta Dolok Village, Pakantan District, Mandailing Natal. It is hoped that the village can serve as a role model in the development of inter-religious harmony in a society that is still uncertain in interacting with people of different faiths.

The residents of Huta Dolok Village, made up by Muslims and Christians, have always lived in peace and harmony. This area is a part of the larger Mandailing area, which statistically is inhabited by the Muslim majority (BPS Provinsi Sumatera Utara, 2020). Historically, Desa Huta Dolok is the only Mandailing area that has been entered by Dutch missionaries since 1821 (Lubis & Lubis, 2020). The Christian tradition with its old church is local pride for the residents of Huta Dolok Village. Along their dynamic process as a society, the

residents of Desa Huta Dolok have never been troubled by their religious differences, and instead have displayed a harmonious interreligious relationship.

Both Muslim and Christian residents of Huta Dolok Village are able to equally uphold *Dalian Na Tolu* customs and religions. *Dalian Na Tolu* in the Mandailing community is a kinship system that serves as a foundation in performing a variety of deeds (Nasution, 2015). This integration of religious understanding with local cultural approaches certainly needs to be appreciated because it is able to penetrate religious barriers that tends to be exclusive. According to Asrizal and Armita (2019) if one of the residents holds a religious or traditional celebration or party, all other Muslim and Christian residents will flock to contribute to the event by carrying out their roles according to their respective positions in the *Dalian Na Tolu* custom as either *Mora*, *Kahanggi* or *Anak Boru*.

Based on the aforementioned phenomenon, this study aimed to explore a local culture-based approach in nurturing religious harmony through the implementation of *Dalihan Na Tolu* traditional process by the residents of Huta Dolok Village. Practically, this research can be used as a reference in carrying out public relations activities involving different religions. Thus, this study aimed to explore the actualization of the diversity among the residents of Huta Dolok Village who have been able to maintain harmony in their multireligious communities.

B. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach in obtaining and analyzing the data on the views and practices of the religious figures, customary leaders and the residents of Huta Dolok Village in maintaining interreligious harmony in their community. The research locus was chosen based on the fact that the Muslim and Christian residents of Huta Dolok Village have been able to live in peace and harmony without any conflict. The researchers believed that this reality called for in-depth research. The data collected are descriptive data on the socio-cultural context of the Huta Dolok residents, the traditional and religious figures' approaches in nurturing and maintaining their interreligious harmony, and their views on *Dalihan Na Tolu* kinship system in Huta Dolok Village. Data collection were carried out by means of observation, interviews and documentation, while Furthermore, Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and data conclusions verification, was employed as the data analysis technique (Miles & Huberman, 2019).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Portrait of Muslim-Christian Inter-religious Harmony in Huta Dolok Village

Huta Dolok is a village inhabited by both Muslims and Christians. Before the spread of Islam and Christianity in the area, the residents of Huta Dolok Village as a whole still adhered to animistic beliefs referred to by the locals as *Parbegu* or *Pelebegu*, which perceives that the spirits of ancestors are able to provide certain instructions and powers, with which the people, led by their kings, perform certain rituals in their daily life (Lubis & Lubis, 2020).

Geographically, Huta Dolok is such a relatively small but densely-populated village that the houses of its Muslim and Christian residents are built close to each other. The Muslim community in the village as the majority has so far been able to provide the Christian minority a sense of security, which is not only based on the principle of equal citizenship alone, but also the awareness that differences in faith do not have to bring about divisions and suspicion, but, on the contrary, religions preach respect for others' different beliefs. This is as expressed by Markus, a Christian villager, who stated, "Basically, we are all the same. [We] came from the same origins, and have the same goal as God's people" (Markus, 2022).

Daily worship by Muslims in Huta Dolok Village such as daily prayers is performed at the mosques and *mushalla* located on the side of the village's main street. Worship activities such as recitation of Ya-Sin, *dhikr* and religious sermons are performed as part of a sacred procession or after a death. In addition, other religious activities are guided by the programs proposed by the village's *Badan Kemakmuran Masjid* (Mosque Prosperity Agency) and activities initiated periodically by the sub-district's *Indonesian Ulama Council* (MUI). Religious preaching or sermons carried out by Muslims in the village aim solely to preach true obedience to the teachings of Islam rather than to build the disruptive narratives of religious differences.

Da'wah (preaching) delivered by a preacher (locally called *ayah* or *buya*) in Huta Dolok Village, must not ignore the socio-religious factors of the local community. This principle is what in turn shapes a moderate perspective on religious teachings which gives birth to the values of mutual respect for the differences among the people of the village. Therefore, from the perspective of the sociology of religion, the world-view as shared by the people of Huta Dolok Village indicates a strong respect for human values (Muzairi, 2017).

Likewise, Christians in Huta Dolok Village displayed the same degree of the religious faithfulness by not only obediently worshipping in their church but also

highly respecting the beliefs of their Muslim neighbours. Their obedience to their faith is supported by their sense of pride in the church that has stood firmly since 1877. The church which, built in 1877, is the oldest church in North Sumatra and is currently the only place of worship for Christians in the village (Lubis & Lubis, 2020).

The attitude of moderation nurtured among the Christians in Huta Dolok Village reinforces the church's narrative of equality among human beings. The view that focuses on equality in the perspective of religious moderation is part of an effort to alleviate the sides of every religious teaching that promotes violence against religious differences. This view evidently not only brings a sense of togetherness and harmony in Huta Dolok Village, but also strengthens the ties of brotherhood among the people. The residents of the village are able to create a peaceful atmosphere in the midst of their lives by exploring a sense of togetherness with the existing traditions. In addition, any preaching of the teachings of their religions is never imbued with materials that may lead to conflicts.

Statistically, Muslims make up the majority of the residents of Huta Dolok Village. As a comparison, Muslim residents consist of seventy-five families with a total of three hundred residents while the Protestant Christians consist of only twenty-two families with a total of fifty residents.

Table 1. Total Percentage of Muslims and Christians in Huta Dolok Village

Religion	Total		
	Number of Family	Number of People	Percentage (%)
Islam	75	300	83
Christianity	22	50	17

Source: Document from Huta Dolok Village

While Muslims are greater in number, they exhibit no arrogance and feeling of superiority or treat Christians discriminatively. This is evident from the intimate economic activities and social interaction among the residents of Huta Dolok Village. The coffee shops (locally called *lopo*) where the farmers and some employees usually hang out before going about their businesses are filled with Muslims and Christians visitors. No coffee shops segregate the Muslims from the Christians or vice versa, unlike the case in Kampung Baru, Panyabungan Utara, Mandailing Natal, where Muslims' and Christians' socio-economic activities are kept apart in such places as shopping centers and shops.

The growth of togetherness among Muslims and Christians in such daily activities is driven by the kinship system known as *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which has existed since before the colonial period and stems from the local wisdom. Kinship in Huta Dolok Village's case manifested in the form of intermarriage, which eventually gave birth to relatives by clan later known As *Mora*, *Kahanggi* and *Anak Boru*.

The socio-religious and economic cooperation is built by the Muslims and the Christians in Huta Dolok Village indiscriminate of religions by prioritizing four aspects of a symbiotic relationship of mutualism, which include social, economic aspect, customary and socio-religious aspects of the residents' lives. Cooperation in the social aspect occurs in village-related development and empowerment. For example, the Christians were involved in the construction of *Madrasah Aliyah Ibadurrahman*, and together with the Muslim villagers, they always participate in *gotong royong*. Cooperation in the economic aspect, meanwhile, is evident in the Muslim residents' practice of providing loans and land lease as well as buying and selling agricultural and plantation products to their Christian counterparts or vice versa. Cooperation in the customary aspect of the residents' lives takes place, among others, in the events of *horja pabuat boru* (wedding parties) and *horja siluluton* (death ceremonies), during which the traditional leaders always play a role in *markobar* (delivering *kobar* or introduction to the traditional procession of wedding/death). The *kobar* is delivered by Muslim traditional leaders at every event held by either the Muslims and the Christians (Nasution, 2016). Finally, cooperation in the socio-religious field can be observed in the distribution of *qurban* meat on *Eid al-Adha*. All Christians in Huta Dolok Village receive a coupon for free meat like other Muslims. Regarding this practice, a Christian resident named Pandapotan mentioned, "We as Christians here do receive the portions of *qurban* meat every *Eid al-Adha*, and we are very grateful to have Muslim brothers like them" (Pandapotan, 2021).

Based on the above description, the cooperative relationship in socio-economic, cultural and socio-religious aspects maintained by the residents of Huta Dolok residents represents intertwined family and citizenship values. The absence of segregation and differences in social and economic activities in Huta Dolok Village shows that the community still upholds familial values.

The Role of Dalian Na Tolu in Nurturing Muslim-Christian Harmony in Huta Dolok Village

The residents of Huta Dolok Village are originally Batak-Mandailing ethnic communities. Being a part of the ethnic Batak-Mandailing, the residents of Huta

Dolok Village embrace *Dalian Na Tolu* social system, which is a kinship system consisting of three elements, namely *Mora*, *Kahanggi* and *Anak Boru*. *Mora* refers to the whole family or community from the behalf of the wife's family, while *Kahanggi* is the whole family or community of the same clan. *Anak Boru*, meanwhile, is the whole family or group of husband's family (Nasution, nd)

Etymologically, *Dalian* means 'stove', and *Na Tolu* means 'three'. When combined, the term simply means three-legged stove. The three stoves in question are containers that resemble cauldrons usually used for cooking in a feast. This *Dalian Na Tolu* philosophy in the view of the Batak people in general is a figure of speech that illustrates an equally shared role (Hanafi, 2017). This means that in social life, each element of *Dalian Na Tolu* plays the same role in life as unit. Together the three stoves support the cauldron which is used as a place to cook all kinds of dishes. If one of the stoves fails to support the cauldron properly, it will fall off and the food will spill out. On the other hand, if all the stoves are both sturdy and balanced, the cauldron will remain stable until the food is cooked.

The *Dalian Na Tolu* system plays an important role in much of both the lower middle class and the upper middle class of Mandailing tribal community. (Hanafi, 2017). The people of Huta Dolok Village shared the belief that the interaction based on the kinship system incorporated in *Dalian Na Tolu* precedes the relationship on the basis of shared religions. Rather than discriminate people based on their religion, the kinship system in *Dalian Na Tolu* distinguish people according to what clan they belong to, by figuring out whether they belong to the *Mora*, *Kahanggi* or *Anak Boru* groups in a given *huta* (village).

In practice, the roles of *Mora* and *Anak Boru* in Huta Dolok Village are assumed by both Muslim and Christian residents, meaning that the Christians have *Mora* and *Anak Boru* from among the Muslims, and vice versa. The role of *Kahanggi*, on the other hand, is predominantly assumed by the two religious groups since the dominant clans in the village are *Nasution* and *Lubis*, both of which have Muslim and Christian members.

The kinship system of *Dalian Na Tolu* in Huta Dolok Village has proven to strengthen not only the unity but also the sense of solidarity and togetherness. The sense of togetherness is able to create the feelings of sympathy and empathy at the same time. This is well-reflected in the daily interactions among the youth in the village. Muslims and Christians intermingle in everyday life, both at work and in coffee shops where young people usually gather and socialize.

Regarding this, Nasution, a Muslim religious figure in Huta Dolok village, stated, "We here always maintain cohesiveness, both in daily interactions and in work, we never discriminate against religions. We feel as one family here, so

helping in the name of brotherhood is more important than helping in the name of religion” (Nasution, 2022).

Based on the above description, it can be emphasized that the religious harmony built in Huta Dolok practically can be traced back to the long historical traditions that have predated the arrival of the two religions in the village. *Dalian Na Tolu* as a kinship system that applies regardless of religion functions as a reinforcement of the values of harmony, togetherness and tolerance in the daily life of the residents of Huta Dolok.

D. CONCLUSION

The religious harmony maintained by the Muslims and the Christians in Huta Dolok Village with its *Dalian Na Tolu* system is an important capital in nurturing peaceful and harmonious relationship among religious communities. Religious harmony is maintained by the residents of Huta Dolok by upholding the values of brotherhood as represented in the *Dalian Na Tolu* system. The *Dalian Na Tolu* system embraced by the residents of Huta Dolok has given birth to the view that religious differences do not hinder cooperative relationship among the believers in various aspects of their life, from village-related development and empowerment as in the involvement of both Muslims and Christians in the development of *Madrasah Aliyah Ibadurrahman* in the village and in jointly held *gotong royong*, to the implementation of the religious rituals of each religion. This certainly would not have happened without mutual respect and strong bonds of brotherhood on the basis of humanity in the kinship system of local wisdom in the Huta Dolok community called *Dalian Na Tolu*.

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