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# Analysis of life's inter-religious harmony based on the philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu* in Sipirok Sub-district, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatera Province

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## ABSTRACT

The beauty of harmony lies in people having a feeling of security and comfort to live together in one community even though they are from different ethnic groups; different clans and they uphold different religions. Harmony is mainly created from *Dalihan Na Tolu*'s local ties which regulates people's lifestyles, both in acting, behaving and in interacting with others. The research problem identifies *Dalihan Na Tolu* as a unifying media in order to know the roles of FKUB and the local government in preserving inter-religious harmony. Research objective is to broaden the Regional Government's knowledge on preservation of harmony between religious communities and make it a model at the local, regional and national levels. Researchers visited respondents from various walks of life and data were gathered from in-depth observations and interviews conducted with respondents. Results indicated that each has rights and obligations both to social life, customary activities and everyday relationships.

## KEYWORDS

*Dalihan Na Tolu*; Indonesia; inter-religious harmony of life; South Tapanuli Regency

## Introduction

Harmonization refers to harmony in the lives of people who live in a place but are from various ethnic groups, tribes, clans and different religions. Daryanto (2007, p. 257) stated that "Harmonization is harmony, the search for harmony." People who are in harmony live side by side safely and peacefully without fear. Such harmonization of community life can be found in Sipirok Sub-district, South Tapanuli Regency. Muslims who live with Christians often live next door to neighboring houses, rice fields or gardens, but they live in harmony and greet each other.

The creation of harmonization between religious adherents is mainly due to the existence of the local ties of *Dalihan Na Tolu* which regulates the pattern of life's relationships between citizens, both in acting, behaving and in interacting with others. This structure of community life is thus easy to find in Sipirok Sub-district where houses of worship are built close together and neighbors who are adherents of different religions make friends with followers of other religions and are united in social activities.

Harmonization of life between religions in Sipirok Sub-district has been going on for quite a long time. According to the residents, it is said that they come from the descendants of the

same ancestors, namely, from the Sipirok pagan community (before embracing religion). After Islam and Christianity entered Sipirok, then according to their respective beliefs, some people embraced Islam while others embraced Christianity. With such family background, it is not uncommon to find houses of Muslim residents with Christian houses next to each other's walls, because the houses that they occupy are often given to them as a legacy from their ancestors who were previously a united family and family clan.

## Research methods

This research was conducted from December 2018 to August 2019. The location of the study was in Sipirok Sub-district, South Tapanuli Regency, with a population of approximately 33,982 inhabitants in 2018, consisting of 16,894 males and 17,088 females spread across 34 Villages and 6 Kelurahan.

This study did not use the term population. The sampling technique used was purposive sample which was the technique of determining the sample with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2009, p. 24). According to Arikunto (2009, p. 183), the purposive selection of samples in the study would be guided by the conditions that might be met as follows:

- (1) Sampling might be based on certain characteristics, characteristics or characteristics, which are the main characteristics of the population.
- (2) Subjects taken as samples really were the subjects that contained the most features found in the population (key subjects).
- (3) Determination of population characteristics was done carefully in the preliminary study.

According to Suyanto (2005, p. 171), the research mechanism in this research informant includes several types, namely:

- (1) Key Informants: Head of Sipirok Sub-District.
- (2) Main Informant: Head of FKUB Sipirok Sub-district, Secretary of Sipirok Sub-district, Village Head and Headman Sub-district.
- (3) Additional Informants: people who have backgrounds as religious leaders (Religious Teachers, Religious Leaders, Priests), community leaders, and traditional leaders. The selection of informants used snowball throwing techniques. If the object asked to the informant is saturated in the sense that the answer given is the same, then the interview process will be terminated. Burhan Bungin (2003, p. 23) stated that: The rolling of sample selection through snowball sampling techniques, both for informant samples and social situations, would eventually reach a limit where no variation in information was found (information saturation occurs). At this time the selection of new samples was no longer needed, in other words, the activity of collecting data or information in the field was considered to be over.

To obtain data, a qualitative historical approach was used, in which the research process was carried out with a reasonable or natural background, the process forms a cycle that focuses on understanding the object under study using the research field and the farm of reference from the research team. For research data collection we used direct observation techniques Interview, namely, literature studies.

## Discussion

Sipirok Sub-district is a sub-district in South Tapanuli Regency, in 2018 it had a population of approximately 33,982 people consisting of 16,894 men and 17,088 women spread in 34 villages and 6 villages of the composition of the population. Approximately 10% adheres to Christianity while Hindus, Buddhists, and Konghuchu are absent, the rest are adherents of Islam. Transportation access to Sipirok Sub-district is classified as very good because it is a trans sumatera road and its role is vital as a land transportation lane between Sipirok Sub-district City and other Sub-districts in South Tapanuli Regency such as Arse Sub-district, Saipar Dolok Hole Sub-district, and Aek Bilah Sub-district as well as connecting with surrounding villages.

Sipirok area has cool air and it is surrounded by several mountains or tor and hills or dolok which is a tourist destination for local people and others outside sipirok. Among them are Tor Sibohi, Tor Nangge, Tor Palakka Gading, Tor Parsarunean, Tong Sianggo Tano, Tor Sarogodung and Dolok Lampesong (4.97). The population of Sipirok sub-district consists of followers of Islam and followers of the Protestant and Catholic religions. From the 34 villages and 6 kelurahan located in the Sipirok sub-district, nearly 28,885 people (85%) are Muslim and 5,097 people (15%) are Christians and Protestants. In some villages the Christians are the majority population, such as Banjar Toba village, Padang matinggi, Hutaraja.

*Dalihan Na Tolu* (three-pole stove) is a philosophy of life that is followed by sipirok people for generations. The kinship system of the Sipirok community is not much different from that of the Batak community in general and it is based on the lineage of the patrilineal father. A boy is not only the successor to his descendants, but also the heir to family responsibilities instead of the role of his father and successor to his father's clan. Thus, a kinship system is formed which binds the descendants with the inherited clan. For example, a grandfather who has the surname siregar, then from the children to grandchildren and great-grandchildren will still have/belong to the same clan as the grandfather.

According to an interview with the traditional leader of Sipirok in Sialagundi village, Ja Tenggar Siregar stated that:

In the implementation of traditional events in Sipirok, these must be attended by 3 (three) northern components, namely *mora*, *kahanggi* and *boru* children. These events include *siluluton* (sadness) such as the death of family members and *siriaon* (joyous events) such as weddings, entering new homes, circumcision events, thanksgiving festivals. In organizing these traditional events, the procession was not infrequently followed by those who adhered to Islam and Christianity. This has often happened, for example in Kelurahan Parausorat, Sibadoar Village, Bulu Mario Village, Kelurahan Bunga Bondar. (Interview: August 23, 2018, in the village of Sialagundi)

Harmonization of religious life in Sipirok will be seen more clearly at the moment of traditional parties, for example, at marriages, at new house entry events, child naming, even at the event of misfortune or death of family members. The necessity of providing accommodation for party events is usually handled by followers of Islam and even those who have a Christian celebration. This is very understandable for adherents of Christianity because adherents of Islam have religious laws regarding *halal* and *haram* food. The procession of the implementation of traditional events is always adapted to the function of someone in the traditional event. Even though the *mora* adheres to Islam, the adopted

son embraces Protestant Christianity or Catholic Christianity; *anak boru* must remain respectful of his Muslim religion, and vice versa, if the *mora* is Christian, the Muslim sons of the religion must also continue to respect the Christian religion. Such kinship also applies to the *kahanggi* even though they have different religions.

With the implementation of such customary arrangements, religious differences in the Sipirok community relations are not very clear, but this does not mean that the quality of their faith is lower when compared to religious communities in other areas. The creation of such a mindset is because relationships or kinship are arranged in *Dalihan Na Tolu* system which has been passed down from generation to generation. The citizens have a view on violating the traditional order to them it means breaking their ancestors' advice, which also means opposing the will of the surrounding community. If it opposes the will of the surrounding community, of course, it can be the subject of discussion, or excluded from the environment of the community. According to an interview with one of the youth leaders in Bagas Lombang Village:

Harmonization of residents in the religious aspect in Sipirok Sub-District from the past until now can be seen from the phenomenon of the location of places of worship, the location between the mosque and the church in several villages is no more than a radius of 150 meters. Likewise, disputes between religious adherents about the ascetic house of worship have never been heard. Adherents of Christianity as a minority religion have never felt intimidated by followers of Islam while carrying out their religious worship. The sense of mutual understanding between the followers of these two religions is always well established. It is said that in this area we can still find the Marjambar tradition, namely, the distribution of Eid cakes by Muslims to relatives, neighbors who are Christians during Eid al-Fitr or vice versa from Christians to Muslims in the New Year (Interview with Mr. Sutan Muda Siregar in Bagas Lombang Village on February 4, 2019).

According to Hendropuspito (1984, p. 57), "Religion has a function to foster brotherhood especially among internal religious communities. But like the two sides of the religious coin, it has a dual role to play between integrative functions and disintegrative functions in social reality, depending on the context of internal or external relations of religious communities."

Although the Sipirok community is a pluralistic society, there are two major religions and a diverse clan community, still able to live together in harmony and peace, and we have never heard of any problem in the sense of a meaningful problem that was related to religion in the Sipirok community. There have been one or two small ripples that were rare, but were well resolved with mutual understanding and respect for each religious community. So many mosque and church buildings in this area are built close together and the distance between them is not too far apart as in Bunga Bondar Village and Sibadoar Village which have mosques and churches that are not far apart. In Sipirok City, precisely in Bagas Na Godang Village, there is a large mosque and a large church which are also quite close, about one hundred meters apart. Sabri (2004, p. 56) stated that:

A foreign observer once mentioned Indonesia as a paradise for religions. The reason is that all religions can live in harmony and peace in the midst of diversity in the archipelago, Indonesia is said to be a harmonious place for the meeting of major religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The observer then pointed to the closeness of the Istiqlal and Cathedral mosque buildings in Jakarta. Also the Brobudur temple in Central Java, which has continued to be maintained and has become one of the prima donna of tourism.

According to the writer's interview, a young man from Baringin Sipirok village said:

It is still fresh in my memory that when I was a child, I have forgotten the exact year now, but I guess it was sometime in the 1980s, my father and mother went to Padang Matinggi Village, not far from Baringin Village, where my father lived a long time ago. At that time there was the inauguration of the church on which there was a statue of a rooster crowing. Mother and father, together with other Muslims helped each other in the kitchen business in preparation for the inauguration of the church. They joined in cooking, arranging chairs, cleaning kitchen utensils with the other workers (Interview with Torkis Siregar in Baringin Village, 5 February, 2019).

One other thing that can be found in the lives of the civil society in Sipirok community is the term *marjambar* (exchanging give and take). *Marjambar* comes from the Batak Angkola in Sipirok sub-language. "*Mar*" means to do, to do while "*Jambar*" means to exchange or take turns. When these words are combined, they have the meaning of giving alternately. The Sipirok community has a tradition, in the form of providing a variety of snacks for Eid al-Fitr by Muslims to Christians, in contrast by Christians to Muslims before Christmas and the New Year. Adherents of Islam will usually deliver a variety of cakes that are packaged in such a way to their relatives or neighbors who are Christians. This cake packaging is usually arranged on special plates, trays or other kitchen utensils that are suitable as a place to arrange several types of cakes neatly. On the other hand, Christian followers do the same thing to Muslims, by packaging various cakes in a sterile place, so that their relatives or neighbors who are Muslim do not have doubts about the halal status of the cakes that are given.

For Muslim communities in Sipirok, holding prayers five times a day and Friday prayers on Friday is a routine religious activity. For residents who are diligent in performing their prayers in the mosque, they are respected in the eyes of the community. The term for them is for example, evening, *uztad* or teacher. Even though religious orders encourage congregational prayers for Muslims in the mosque, according to the observation of the research team, this was only carried out in Ma'grib, *isya* and dawn prayers, as well as Mag'rib prayers and evening prayers. Since the Sipirok community generally consists of farmers, the residents usually do the Dhuhr and Asyar prayers in their places of work such as in their fields.

Every month of Ramadan, from various mosques, the sound of people reading the verses of the Holy Qur'an, *tadarus*, the call to prayers and other activities can be heard over the loudspeakers. These scenes can be found almost in all villages in the Sipirok Sub-district. Before the dawn prayer, a voice begins to wake the residents to eat *saur* before the commencement of the ceremony at the mosque and *shurau* before 11:00 p.m.–12:00 a.m. at night local time. According to the observations of the research team, from several mosques such as the Taqwa mosque in the Sipirok Market, Seri Alam Dunia mosque in Bagas Na Godang, almost every day before the dawn prayer, the voice of the Qur'anist is heard, local people call it *tarain*.

Christians in the District of Sipirok can also live in harmony and peace with Muslims, although they are a minority group. They have no disturbance from their Muslim neighbors while observing their religious activities. Some of the followers of Christianity in Sipirok are members of the religious organization (church) Huria Keristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) and some are members of the Angkola Protestant Church (GKPA) Church. Each religious organization has its own congregation and church.

Every Sunday, starting from morning until late afternoon, it is easy to distinguish between Muslims and Christians. Religious followers usually walk to the church around the Sipirok market; there are those who walk, ride a pedicab and some who ride motorbikes and very rarely, those who use private cars. From 8:00 a.m until 11:00 a.m it is usually the turn of children and adolescents, while from 11:00 a.m until late afternoon it is usually adults, both men and women. They generally attend the HKBP church in the village of Banjartoba, precisely before the building of the South Tapanuli General Hospital. With a feeling of security and comfort, they move without being afraid of interference or threats from adherents of Islam who are the majority religion in the Sipirok District.

The attitude of tolerance and pluralism applied by the Sipirok community creates a sense of security and comfort for various worshipers who have no disturbance in carrying out their respective religious services. Residents have the view that they may be adherents of different religions, but it does not stop them from living in harmony and mutually respecting the religion of others. This is the true wealth of the Sipirok people. The context of tolerance and pluralism that they apply in their social lives also reflect in the realms of their religious worship. The matters of religious worship are matters of the religious community itself, whereas in daily life, it is a common affair, regardless of any religion.

The creation of harmonization of life between religious adherents (Islam and Christianity) in Sipirok Sub-district cannot be separated from the role of the government which always provides insights for people to always live in harmony and peace with the slogan, “*Damai itu Indah*” (*Peace is Beautiful*). The Head of Sipirok Sub-district together with the Religious Chairperson of Communication Forum incidentally visit the villages to provide information about the importance of harmony. Indonesia as a pluralist country must be able to uphold the motto of Unity in Diversity under the ideology of Pancasila so that its development and sustainability can be achieved and enjoyed by the community. In an interview with Mr. Sardin Hasibuan, SH, the District Head of Sipirok District, he stated that:

To maintain harmony and tolerance between religious communities in Sipirok Sub-district, the sub-district often goes to villages and villages to meet residents in order to provide counseling to people to always maintain peace. On this occasion The Head of Sipirok Sub-district said that if there was a break in communication between religious adherents, it would be conveyed to the village head or lurah in order to find a way out rather than to be justified by his own vigilance. Open conflict between religious adherents in Sipirok sub-district has never occurred, but to prevent it from ever happening, opportunities will always be created for communication with religious leaders. During this visit, the Camat is usually accompanied by the Chair of the FKUB and the Village and Lurah Heads (Interview with the Head of Sipirok Sub-district at Sipirok Sub-District Office, February 4, 2019).

On various occasions, if there are residents who invite the Sipirok District Government to attend activities carried out by the youth group or other youth organizations, the Head of Sipirok Sub-district will try to attend. This is intended to establish good relations between the sub-district government and citizens from various elements of the society.

Population mobility which is increasingly dynamic does not only cause an increase in the population of Sipirok Sub-district, but also the emergence of seeds of problems in the aspect of harmonization of life between religious communities. The mobility of the population from other regions to Sipirok has various objectives such as, finding new jobs, educational goals and there are also those who are placed as State Civil Apparatus both as teachers and as non-education personnel. There are migrants who come from the area of Toba, Nias, Mandailing

Natal, West Sumatra and areas outside the island of Sumatra. In this case, the source of the problem is often the newcomers who do not understand and do not want to know about the local life of *Dalihan Na Tolu* which has been embedded in the civil society as a customary order, social order, and communication.

Residents who come from the Toba area, in general, are people who are placed as teachers in Sipirok Sub-district. One of their characteristics is that they always look for a change or a place to live in common with them, namely the Christian Protestant religion. While migrants from Nias are generally Christian, most times, the purpose of their visit is to find work. The work they can do is usually in the agriculture sector because they do not have adequate education and skills to become teachers.

Arrivals from Mandailing Natal generally have professions in the field of education personnel such as middle and high school teachers. They live temporarily, usually around the sipirok market, while migrants from West Sumatra generally prefer to be traders. Their dwellings are generally around the sipirok market. These immigrants from Mandailing Natal and West Sumatra are generally Muslims so that it is easier for them to adapt to the predominantly Muslim community.

Bagir (2011, p. 33) stated that “As many as 39 problems of harmony between communities have been recorded as matters relating to houses of worship, out of which 32 cases were related to interfaith relations.” The seeds of conflict that have been sown in Sipirok Sub-district were planted by migrants, especially by migrants from Toba who wanted to open a Typical Batak Restaurant in Sipirok. Subanidiyo (2010, p. 35) said:

Following reports from various fields of study regarding religious matters mentioned that there are indeed efforts to fight over worshipers, various activities were often considered to reveal the potential for conflict, although rarely until it appears to be an open conflict, starting from the school recitation activities, to the use of loudspeakers in the mosque. In Medan, schools with certain religious missions are very crowded, from the elementary school to the University. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, are all represented during study in school by people who come from these religions that are related to the mission of the school in question.

On the same occasion, we gathered from an interview with one of the youth leaders in the Sipirok Market that, “*The Civil Society of Sipirok understands that they are not prohibited from eating food that is strictly forbidden by Sipirok Muslims; however, if they want to eat such they must do so in their own homes and not openly*” (Interview with Mr. Mukhlis Hutasuhut, 3 February, 2019).

Some of the migrants who came from Nias also put forward their wishes even though this was contrary to the interests of the Sipirok people. This behavior is marked by the efforts of some nomads from Nias who are Christians and their attempts to raise pigs. This behavior is of course very contrary to the life patterns of the Sipirok people who have embraced Islam.

A community member in Sipirok District was quoted thus:

Around 2007, there were indications of raising pigs by migrants from Nias in the Pasar Malam area (located close to the Sipirok Detention Center). This event certainly triggered the anger of the community who requested that the intention be stopped. Issues that developed eventually led to the migrants moving and they did not open the farm (Interview with Karim Siregar in Bagas Na Godang Village, 4 February, 2019).

When observing the conversation of several residents in one of the coffee stalls that were found in the center of Sipirok Market, to be precise beside the Education and Culture

Office of Sipirok, we observed that there were issues that developed with the building of a temple in Bulu Payung village. It was said that the ethnic Chinese who already owned land in the area of approximately 20 hectares, built a monastery and also a school that was characterized by Chinese culture. This issue was very unsettling for the Sipirok community because they feared that it could lead to the loss of the local diversity of *Dalihan Na Tolu*.

Agus Salim Lubis et al. (2009, p. 37) stated that, "Sipirok is one of the areas in South Tapanuli Regency which has a relatively good religious harmony. In this area there is almost never an internal conflict between religious communities, collaborations in the social field and even in the religious field were in certain matters well established". This seems to be supported by factors of norms and traditional values that have developed in this area.

Looking at the co-existence between the Islamic followers from Sipirok with Christian followers from Sipirok, there has never been a conflict. Among them, the discussions and expressions conveyed were very polite. According to the research team's observation, the expression of the community in communication often sounds in sentences such as our *moratta mora*, our *kahanggi* is our *kahanggi*, *anak boru* is our *anak boru*. These statements also apply to residents of different religions. This illustrates the fact that the sense of togetherness among the Sipirok community is very high, even though the object that he mentioned is his own but is not expressed by calling mine but calling it our word.

## Conclusion

The strong factor is the creation of harmony between adherents and clans in Sipirok due to strong ties through the philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu*. Through *Dalihan Na Tolu* in the framework, *Mora* (wife's family), *kahanggi* (sister's family in patrilineal clan relations) and *anak boru* (Husband's family) each have rights and obligations both in social life, customary activities and daily social relations. Welcoming speech of traditional party, usually filled by Islamic religious and Christian followers who have kinship relations with parties who have a celebration.

The Sipirok Sub-district Government together with FKUB has a big role in maintaining harmony between followers of different religions and people from different clans. This is done through socialization and visits to villages to give enlightenment to residents about the importance of maintaining harmony.

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