

WE ARE ALL GOD'S CREATION: FREE TAKJIL ACTION AS PART OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION

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Abstract

This article explores the significance of "Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan" (We are All God's Creation) within the Tateli Minahasa community. It focuses on sharing free iftar meals organized by students from the Sociology of Religion Study Program at Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Manado (Manado State Christian Institute). This event showcased the students' compassionate nature as they cared for and cared for others, particularly those from diverse religious backgrounds. This action demonstrates the harmonious coexistence of Christian lecturers and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds with the Muslim community in Tateli. The study employed a phenomenological approach, utilizing observations and interviews to examine the impact of helping others as a tangible act of love on developing a friendly and tolerant religious environment in Indonesia. The findings of the study suggest that the paradigm "Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan" has the potential to enhance the sense of brotherhood and foster closeness, tolerance, and cooperation in diverse settings.

Keywords: *torang samua ciptaan Tuhan, religious moderation, sociology of religion, mapalus cooperation.*

INTRODUCTION

The belief that all of us are God's creation is deeply ingrained in the cultural values of the Minahasa people.

The term "Torang Samua" holds great significance and is connected to the philosophy of *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* (the idea that humans exist to uplift and humanize one

another). This expression carries great significance when interpreted from an epistemological standpoint. The Minahasa people's rich history and achievements have left a lasting impact on the global stage, with numerous significant pieces of evidence to support this. Their true significance is evident in the examples of individuals such as Mr. A. A. Maramis, Dr. Sam Ratulangi, and Babe Palar, who were able to surpass their ethnic differences and make substantial contributions to the establishment of the Indonesian nation.

The phrase "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" highlights the belief that each of us, as individuals, possesses distinct qualities as part of God's creation. It invites individuals to embrace the principles of Pancasila and embody progress, independence, and civility in their attitudes and behaviors, thus fostering the values of humanity (Sondakh, 2002).

In a recent study by Nixon Grosman, Hedy Rogahang, and Deflita R. N. Lumi (2021), it was revealed that the residents of North Sulawesi have been consistently exposed to the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" (We are all God's creation) from 2016 to 2021. This philosophy was introduced by Olly Dondokambey and Steven Kandouw (ODSK) during their tenure as Governor and Vice Governor of North Sulawesi. This philosophy aligns with the well-known "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (We are all brothers and sisters) that was introduced by Evert Erenst Mangindaan, the former Governor of North Sulawesi, and has gained widespread popularity among the locals. The values of unity and tranquility in "*Torang Samua Basudara*" are now enhanced by "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*."

The philosophy of "*Torang Semua Basudara*" emerged between 1995 and 2000 in response to Indonesian ethnic conflicts misattributed to religion. Conflicts between Christians and Muslims occurred in Ternate, Ambon, Poso, and Kalimantan.

When a society claims exclusive religious truth while denying other faiths' legitimacy or salvation, it can cause conflict. Religious groups classified as "majority" or "minority" in a region may also cause conflict. Quantifying religious adherents and using this to determine superiority or inferiority can cause community issues. If not handled properly, these dynamics can lead to religious

conflicts, death, property damage, and the displacement of Christian and Muslim communities (Pangalila et al., 2019).

Before Indonesia's independence, Minahasa people had adopted Catholicism and Protestant Christianity from the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch through educational and healthcare institutions. Kiyai Mojo and a group of farmers and traders arrived in Tonsea to spread Islam. They married Minahasa Tondano residents, creating the Javanese Village of Tondano, a mix of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. These are Imam Bonjol's descendants (Mooduto et al.; G., 2016). This historical experience and philosophy helped the Minahasa avoid religious conflicts.

The philosophy of "*Torang Samua Basudara*" complements the belief that we are all God's creations. As "*basudara*" symbolizes brotherhood, "*Torang Samua Basudara*" includes everyone. It implies that "*Torang Samua Basudara*" means we are all brothers and sisters and that we share the same blood and air on Earth. In addition to that philosophy, "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" implies that God created all humans and the entire realm, which includes people and the environment that needs preservation, safeguarding, and peace. These two philosophies emphasize humanity's duty to promote peace and humanize society through harmony and tranquility.

Individuals reside in diverse ethnicities, races, religions, cultures, and languages across the globe. The presence of diversity in a nation's population is not a weakness but rather a source of strength and advantage. "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity) is a fundamental national principle that requires preservation and adherence. "God is good to all" (Psalm 145:9) implies that all human beings are interconnected, sharing a common ancestry and reflecting God's divine nature. This concept is also supported by the notion that humans are God's most esteemed creation (Ismail, 2011). Hence, our humanity is not solely determined by birth but also becomes evident as we develop and interact within our social circles.

Several researchers have researched the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" and found evidence of sensitivity and a calling to humanize others through encounters and

dialogues among religious communities, both nationally and internationally. An instance of this is the study conducted by Irvan Nixon Grosman, Hedy Rogahang, and Deflita R. N. Lumi (2021) on the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" which demonstrates that the inhabitants of North Sulawesi have encountered this philosophy. The inclusion of interactions, discussions, acceptance, collaboration, and establishing connections or bonds with other religious communities has demonstrated considerable significance in promoting religious moderation. Nevertheless, the scope of that research is confined solely to literature analysis.

Sudirman Yahya (2020) has conducted additional research on the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*." The user examined the implementation of religious moderation in the slogan "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" about the adherence to divine worship, encompassing both minority and majority groups. Moderation is prominently emphasized in social interactions among individuals in society and organizations, as well as in the endorsement from the city government of Manado in religious forums, the establishment of structures for places of worship, and various social activities.

A recent study has discovered that the cohesion among religious communities in Manado has catalyzed the advancement of other districts and cities throughout North Sulawesi. According to Indriati (2021), the implementation of activities and programs by the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in Manado catalyzes religious leaders to express the desires of their respective religious communities and engage in dialogues with local government officials, regional councils, and stakeholders.

These studies have provided evidence that the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" is deeply ingrained in the people in Manado, influencing various aspects of their daily routines. Nevertheless, research has yet to be conducted on the distribution of free takjil (iftar meal) as a means of promoting religious moderation between the campus community and the Tateli Minahasa community. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct and develop research on distributing free iftars to promote religious moderation in North

Sulawesi. Based on this foundation, the researchers have made initial observations about the lives of the Muslim community in Tateli, Minahasa Regency.

Further research and development can be done to explore the practice of Mapalus in Religious Moderation in the Minahasa community, North Sulawesi. During the holy month of Ramadan, the researchers noticed that Muslims in Tateli set up multiple locations near the Al-Taqwa Mosque to sell iftar food. The Tateli community comprises individuals who practice the Islamic and Protestant Christian faiths. Based on the observation, it was found that the religious practices of Islam and Christianity in Tateli coexist peacefully and harmoniously. The Muslim community in Tateli primarily consists of individuals from Java, Gorontalo, and Bugis. They bring with them their rich cultural heritage and strong adherence to Islamic teachings (Azeharie et al., 2019). Located in the area is a place known as "Kampung Buton," which is primarily inhabited by people from Buton, Southeast Sulawesi. Additionally, a small fraction of the Muslim population in that area originates from Java, Bugis, and Gorontalo.

The followers of Christianity and Islam in Tateli demonstrate a remarkable level of mutual respect and appreciation, which is a testament to their high tolerance. The research highlights the fascinating integration of the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" into the culture of North Sulawesi, specifically within the Tateli community. It also sheds light on the Sociology of Religion Study Program of Manado State Christian Institute, which, as a Christian academic organization, actively participates in humanitarian efforts by providing free takjil to Muslims during sundown to help them break their daily fast. Given this background, the researchers posed the question: What is the significance of religious moderation in the distribution of free iftars in the Tateli Minahasa community?

The research seeks to showcase the importance of Religious Moderation in providing free iftar meals to the Tateli Minahasa community. Sharing free takjil is a meaningful way to express love and care for others, recognizing our shared humanity and the value of cooperation. The study highlights the crucial role of maintaining harmony, peace,

tolerance, and brotherhood among religious communities, including churches, families, the government, and the community.

Literature Review

Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an attitude that embraces religious diversity, acknowledges the challenges that arise from differing beliefs, and seeks to foster harmony within communities. Illustrations involve the tensions arising from contrasting viewpoints on truth, as well as the clashes between radicalism and secularism, exclusivism and pluralism. The focus of religious moderation is to foster tolerance among different religious communities as a response to the dangers posed by religious radicalism. It not only safeguards religious life but also has a broader impact on society and the nation (Direktorat Jenderal Bimas Kristen Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). The religious moderation program in schools was officially launched by Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Qoumas on September 22, 2021. For him, religious moderation is an educational gateway to uphold the cherished national values in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. It is incorporated into the curriculum to enhance teachers', lecturers', and books' understanding of religious moderation (Kemenag, 2021).

Pursuing tolerance and harmony through religious moderation requires collective dedication and perseverance. On one hand, variations in understanding of scriptures within a single religion can result in disagreements or separations. In addition, there can be the emergence of different radical organizations or sects that claim to represent a religion. These groups can foster strong emotions that prioritize self-interest and impact national unity. On the other hand, there are laws and regulations that oversee inter-religious relations, like Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Thus, it is crucial to view national identity as a reflection of the collective spirit and shared humanity in Indonesia, fostering a sense of unity among its diverse population. It is not limited to any specific religion, but rather, it is about Indonesia as a whole (Titaley, 2020).

Titaley (2019) argues that the teachings of Jesus Christ on love have a universal application. It happened during the formation of Indonesia, as it included multiple parties. During that period, the nation's founders crafted and made choices that resulted in profoundly compassionate stages guided by a higher force. The decisions formulated in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution were not solely the result of human deliberation, but rather they were guided by a higher power through the nation's founders. In Indonesia, the Divine Being is known as Tuhan (Lord), a term that is specific to the Indonesian language. Tuhan (Lord) is not associated with any particular religion, making it a unique concept in Indonesia.

Followers of religions need to maintain a balanced approach to their faith, considering the well-being of others as well. It involves being open to forming friendships with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds without categorizing them as non-believers. Similarly, individuals who prioritize their self-interest and fail to demonstrate love and concern for others are seen as excessively focusing on their religious beliefs. In addition, individuals who disparage other religions, including religious figures, and show disrespect towards the sacred symbols of certain religions can be considered as holding extremist perspectives (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

In a study conducted by Saragih (2022), the focus was on Aceh Singkil, particularly the Pakpak tribe residing in Batang Beruh, Dairi. It is evident that religious moderation, rooted in local wisdom, serves as a practical approach to addressing the issue of church burning in Aceh Singkil. Creating a peaceful and moderate society in a diverse community is a strategic approach. The foundational community places great importance on the values passed down by our ancestors, recognizing them as divine creations that foster interdependence, respect, and acceptance among all members. Pancasila is widely regarded as a mindset and attitude that the diverse Indonesian society should embrace.

In his research, Amrullah Zahro (2019) explored the interconnectedness of religious moderation and various aspects of human life,

specifically focusing on education and its role in promoting humanistic social action. The discourse of religious moderation is being actively promoted and integrated into learning activities at universities and various institutions, whether they are formal or non-formal. Educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting religious moderation within the framework of Pancasila for the broader community. It is the responsibility and purpose of every individual as a creations of a higher power to promote peace and harmony.

Conceptual Framework

Torang Samua Ciptaan Tuhan (We are all God's Creation)

"*Torang Samua Ciptaan Tuhan*" is the life philosophy of the Minahasa people, which was introduced by Olly Dondokambey and Steven Kandouw (ODSK) during their tenure and remains significant. The term "*Torang Samua*" encompasses all living beings on Earth, including humans, animals, and plants, as part of God's creations. The philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" is grounded in philosophical, sociological, and theological principles. According to Steward Benly's comment in the Kompasiana newspaper (July 18, 2016), the introduction of the "*Torang Samua Basudara*" philosophy was not intended to replace the existing spiritual philosophy, but rather to enhance human values. ODSK, as leaders, aspire for their legacy to endure both during and beyond their tenure as the governor and vice-governor of North Sulawesi.

The philosophy of *Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan* seeks to foster awareness among the people of North Sulawesi that all individuals, regardless of their diverse ethnicities, races, cultures, and languages, are considered equal in the eyes of God. Despite the apparent physical differences among individuals, all humans belong to the same family within the broader category of humanity. While humans exhibit a range of skin colors, including black, white, brown, and yellow, it is important to note that the color of their blood remains consistent: red. It indicates that there is a familial connection among all human beings (Ismail, 2011). Therefore, the principles upheld by the Minahasa community, as exemplified by *Si*

Tou Timou Tumou Tou, which translates to "people exist to humanize other people," have become ingrained in the culture and are strongly embraced by the inhabitants of North Sulawesi.

The philosophy of *Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*, as described by Olly Dondokambey and Steven Kandouw (ODSK), aims to inspire and awaken the people of North Sulawesi to cultivate love and foster peace. This philosophy emphasizes harmonious relationships not only among individuals but also between humans and the environment (berita manado.com). The statement above illustrates the interconnectedness between humans and God, humans and their peers, and humans and the natural world. It serves as a unified summons to practice love without prejudice. The government aims to make North Sulawesi economically self-sufficient, politically independent, and culturally unique. This objective, outlined in Sulutprov (2023) and supported by Wagiu et al. (2023), is not just a theoretical concept but a call to action to develop the region sustainably. God has entrusted humans with the responsibility to care for and safeguard the environment as a manifestation of their concern for nature. Constructing North Sulawesi is a tangible expression of faith and obligation towards the entrusted responsibility bestowed upon ODSK by God for the inhabitants of North Sulawesi.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative (Creswell, 2015) with a phenomenological approach. Through the phenomenological approach, the research aims to describe and provide detailed explanations about the cultural and religious values concerning beliefs, norms, symbols, language, and everyday life practices. This research was conducted in Tateli, Minahasa Regency, from January to April 2023. The distribution of free takjil (breaking of fast snacks) was carried out by lecturers and students in April along the Trans Sulawesi Highway in Tateli, Minahasa Regency. The researchers also used observations, interviews, and literature studies from various journal articles and relevant books related to the philosophy of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" and religious moderation.

The collected raw data was processed and analyzed to identify significant information. The second step is data reduction, which involves selecting essential data for the research and discarding irrelevant data to produce conclusions. The data is simplified to obtain accurate descriptions. Thirdly, the data is displayed in descriptive presentation, sharpened with data analysis tools. The results of data reduction are presented to conclude. The fourth step involves drawing conclusions based on the managed data analysis. This effort is made to obtain results from the conducted research (Moleong, 2011; Sugiyono, 2011). Ultimately, the author provides conclusions regarding the research conducted concerning the free takjil distribution as part of religious moderation in Tateli, Minahasa.

DISCUSSION

The current collaboration between the Sociology of Religion Study Programme and the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa is intricately linked to the longstanding tradition of the Minahasa society in promoting unity and tranquility amidst diversity. This tradition has been preserved to this day. The diverse nature of Tateli Minahasa fosters prospects for collaboration, communication, and interaction. This relationship is based on the community's lifestyle, which aims to enhance their quality of life and overall welfare. It is demonstrated through diverse endeavors, such as the community called "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*," exemplified in daily life through the cooperative spirit known as "*mapalus*" in the Minahasa tradition.

Tolerance is a hallmark of religious moderation, and North Sulawesi is frequently recognized as the embodiment of tolerance. The Minahasa community's wholehearted embrace of the spirit of tolerance forms the foundation for this recognition, which is deeply rooted in social reality. The Minahasa society is characterized by its pluralistic nature, encompassing multiple ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages. The Sociology of Religion Study Programme focuses on the Minahasa community, which coexists harmoniously and with tolerance towards the Muslim community. The practice of religious moderation in Minahasa prioritizes fundamental human values and fosters a sense

of brotherhood among its adherents. The Sociology of Religion Study Programme demonstrates the expression of human values through their engagement in interactions. They provide complimentary takjil to the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa, while Christians contribute to the maintenance of mosques during Eid festivities (Interview Mashud Doating, April 3, 2023).

Conversely, the feeling of camaraderie is nurtured through familial connections and marriages between different ethnic groups, which take place consistently in a serene and harmonious environment. The academic community of the Sociology of Religion Study Programme is driven by a divine summons to provide sustenance and assistance to the Muslim community. During these interactions, there are exchanges of salutations and expressions of gratitude from the Muslim community.

All religions advocate for love, which is a deterrent against acts of violence committed in the name of religious belief. The dedication to love and non-violence is demonstrated through the fundamental principle of tolerance (Kasiahe, 2023). The sense of community is also evident through mutual visits during important religious celebrations such as Christmas, New Year, and Eid al-Fitr. This moderate religious lifestyle is also evident in educational settings. Prior to the arrival of Ramadan, professors and students from the Sociology of Religion Study Programme were actively distributing takjil (food and drinks) to the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa. It is in line with the vision of the Sociology of Religion Study Programme to produce graduates who excel in the field of sociology of religion by conducting research and engaging in inclusive community service. From a sociological standpoint, the Sociology of Religion Study Programme has effectively implemented a comprehensive vision based on Pancasila-inspired religious moderation, fostering mutual acceptance, respect, and peaceful coexistence (Interview Lidya Kandowangko, April 5, 2023).

Meanwhile, "*mapalus*" refers to a practice of mutual aid and support, which helps to reduce the burden on individuals and meet the daily food requirements of community members (Palar, 2009). Within the region of

Minahasa, the term "*mapalus*" encompasses many aspects. Firstly, it encompasses economic activities that have been historically associated with the clearance of land for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, "*mapalus*" encompasses cultural festivities, wherein individuals collaborate to erect dwellings and community centers, tidy communal areas and shorelines, and engage in various collective endeavors. Finally, "*mapalus*" carries religious importance, encompassing the establishment of churches mosques, and the refurbishment of pastors' residences, referred to as "Pastori."

The Minahasa people's traditional values inherently encompass respect for humanity. The concept of "*mapalus*" in the Minahasa community refers to a fundamental practice of reciprocal aid encompassing both social and religious aspects of life. Essentially, "*mapalus*" refers to a voluntary collaborative endeavor acknowledged and rewarded due to progress in knowledge and technology. The Minahasa community engages in "*mapalus*" activities to collectively shoulder responsibilities, cooperate, and assist one another in achieving mutually agreed objectives.

The partnership between the Sociology of Religion Study Programme and the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa, based on religious moderation, is demonstrated through the "*mapalus*" initiative of providing complimentary meals during the month of fasting (Interview Farhan Wahid, April 11, 2023). In addition, the Sociology of Religion Study Programme is engaged in the task of cleaning up the beaches of Tateli Minahasa. This initiative is motivated by the conviction that maintaining cleanliness is a fundamental component of religious devotion. Their engagement endeavors to organize *mapalus* events, providing takjil without anticipating compensation or remuneration, demonstrating a genuine, balanced, all-encompassing, and diverse approach to social and religious existence. The collaboration between the Sociology of Religion Study Programme and the Muslim community is founded on the common belief of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*," which underscores that all individuals are divine creations. It surpasses the boundaries of ethnic and religious

backgrounds, placing importance on mutual trust and a wide range of skills.

The first time (Interview Patresia Tumba, April 7, 2023) distributed free iftar snacks. Takjil distribution is part of the Sociology of Religion Study Program's Community Service Program with the Student Association. The concept was conceived during the deliberations of the Student Association, with the objective of engaging professors and students from the Sociology of Religion Study Program in takjil-related initiatives, with a particular emphasis on promoting religious moderation. Their pursuit is driven by an affectionate devotion towards God and a compassionate regard for their fellow human beings, as expressed in Matthew 22:37-40 (LAI, 2004). Although a few Muslim individuals rejected the takjil offered to them by declining the distributed food from students and lecturers, most of the Muslim community graciously accepted the food.

All activities are conducted with a profound comprehension of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*," transcending religious and ethnic limitations. Within the social fabric of the community, this has resulted in the establishment of a civil sphere marked by cohesion, camaraderie, reciprocal assistance, acceptance, and religious temperance. The phrase "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" is important beyond biological relatedness. It recognizes that all individuals are valuable creations of a divine being, intended to demonstrate love, aid, and esteem for each other. Hence, these principles form the foundation for the Sociology of Religion Study Program's engagement with the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa, with the objective of cultivating a profound sense of connection.

Establishing mutual trust is a crucial principle in fostering a cohesive social environment devoid of doubt or extremism (Makaruku et al., 2020, Nainggolan, 2022). The active involvement and commitment of both Christian and Muslim communities in societal affairs are based on their mutual belief in the importance of honoring, cherishing, and safeguarding one another as fellow beings created by God. It fosters inclusivity, engagement, and dialogue-free from bias or

prejudice rooted in fundamental characteristics.

Trust and openness are crucial dispositions in the existence of this Pancasila nation. The academics' reciprocal confidence in offering complimentary food and beverages to the Muslim community during iftar demonstrates their engagement in socio-cultural affairs, firmly grounded in harmony and safety. The sensation of security and tranquility enhances their attentiveness and compassion towards others. There is no space for doubt, extremism, narrow-mindedness, or radicalism. Every action is executed with exuberant conviction, motivated not by personal gain but by genuine care for others as fellow individuals.

Within the Sociology of Religion Study Program, all students and lecturers universally define "fellow human beings" as individuals to whom they must exhibit qualities of openness, moderation, and inclusivity. They are expected to embrace others as siblings, irrespective of their religious beliefs. By actively participating in the Tateli Minahasa community, they highlight the significance and objective of living together harmoniously, regarding all individuals as equals in the eyes of God. Religious moderation promotes a harmonious and cooperative environment characterized by unity, compassion, tranquility, and acceptance (Weol et al., 2020). Essentially, the Sociology of Religion Study Program and the Muslim community in Tateli Minahasa foster a state of religious moderation that promotes harmony in their way of life.

CLOSING

A proactive attempt to promote harmony and peace on a global scale is religious moderation. National values like brotherhood, kinship, and tolerance are reinforced by the local wisdom of "*Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan*" (we are all God's creation). Because of the influence of local cultural values, especially the Mapalus tradition of mutual assistance and support, some Muslims accepted the takjil offered by the Sociology of Religion Study Program of IAKN Manado, while others declined. This localized Mapalus action strategy aids the development of society, culture, and religion.

Care is shown to lecturers and students who distribute takjil during the fasting month, as well as to the individual learning about religious moderation in the course. Giving away free iftar meals is an example of the loving attitude that Jesus preached, showing empathy for the Muslim community as fellow members of God's creation.

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