

## Research Article

# Hibualamo as a Forum in Realizing Religious Moderation and Structuring the Social Life of the Tobelo Ethnic Community

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the role of Hibua Lamo as a forum in realizing religious moderation and structuring the social life of the Tobelo ethnic community. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants such as cultural figures, Islamic and Christian religious leaders, academics, and bureaucrats from Tobelo and Galela ethnicities. The analysis was conducted qualitatively and elaborated with relevant theories. The results show that the Hibua Lamo philosophy, which includes the values of O'Odora (unlimited love), O'Diai (mutual improvement), O'Adili (justice for all), O'Hayangi (mutual love), and O'Balihara (mutual care), is still strong in the lives of the Tobelo ethnic group. This philosophy has been the basis for religious moderation since the introduction of Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism in Tobelo and Galela, which were accepted by custom and given room to grow. Even in one big family, these religions coexist. Hibua Lamo also became a reference in organizing the social life of modern Tobelo and Galela communities, by forming organizations according to the government structure in North Maluku. These organizations act as unifying symbols and customary symbols that strengthen the Tobelo and Galela ethnicities as the largest ethnic groups in the region.

**Keywords:** Hibua Lamo; Religious Moderation; Social Structuring

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture. Consisting of more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is inhabited by hundreds of ethnic groups and speaks hundreds of local languages. This diversity is a very valuable asset but at the same time a big challenge in creating social harmony in the midst of complex differences. This is where the importance of social capital, namely the values and norms that live in society, to maintain social integration and cohesion (Saumur, S. A. 2017). Indonesia's success in maintaining this harmony is heavily influenced by deeply rooted local traditions, as seen in the Tobelo ethnic community in North Halmahera. One cultural heritage that plays a major role in maintaining harmony among the Tobelo community is the philosophy of Hibua Lamo, which literally means "Big House". This philosophy is not only a physical symbol in the form of a traditional house, but also a social concept that represents unity and equality among the community (Pababari, M. (2019).

Indonesia's success in maintaining this harmony is heavily influenced by deeply rooted local traditions, as seen in the Tobelo ethnic community in North Halmahera. One cultural heritage that plays a major role in maintaining harmony among the Tobelo community is the philosophy of Hibua Lamo, which literally means "Big House". This philosophy is not only a physical symbol in the form of a traditional house, but also a social concept that represents unity and equality among the community (Pababari, M. (2019)). Hibua Lamo symbolizes an inclusive place, where every individual, regardless of religion or ethnicity, can coexist. Since ancient times, the people of Tobelo have used the values of Hibua Lamo to organize a harmonious life together. In the modern context, these values are increasingly relevant as a concrete example of how local culture can be the foundation of religious moderation and social harmony (Namotemo, H. 2010).

Hibua Lamo does not simply refer to a physical building in the form of a Big House, but is also a social and cultural concept that reflects the values of the people of Tobelo, Galela and Loloda. This philosophy emphasizes that the community is not just a group of individuals living side by side, but also bound by values of togetherness, solidarity and mutual respect that have been passed down from generation to generation. Hibua Lamo is an ideological construct known

as Naga Tau Nahirete, which means “Our Home Together.” This philosophy reflects that every individual lives together. This philosophy reflects that each individual in the community is considered an inseparable part of an extended family. (Banari, J. K. 2000).

Geographically, the Tobelo, Galela and Loloda ethnic groups are spread across the mainland and islands of North Halmahera. The geographical conditions that separate them, plus differences in religion and belief traditions, should be a reason for division. However, these communities use these differences as a basis for strengthening social relations. This is reflected in the philosophy of Ngone O'Ria Dodoto, which means “One Mother, One Kandung”. This philosophy instills the idea that all individuals in the community are brothers and sisters from a single origin, so conflict should be avoided and togetherness upheld. (Morris, B. 2003)

Tangible evidence of this philosophy can be seen in the social practices of the local community. For example, although a large family may have members who follow Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism, they still live in harmony. A survey from the North Halmahera Culture and Tourism Office (2021) showed that 85% of the people of Tobelo, Galela, and Loloda still practice Hibua Lamo values in their daily lives, whether in traditional events, conflict resolution, or other social activities. (Saumur, Soleman Amanan, 2021). In addition, Ngone O'Ria Dodoto also gave birth to the concept of role division in social life. In Hibua Lamo society, there is no domination of the majority group over the minority. Important decisions are made through deliberation involving all parties. The appointment of the community leader, known as Jiko Makolano (King of the Bay), is not done based on lineage, but through elections from community members who are considered to have integrity and leadership skills. Hibua Lamo has also become a symbol of reconciliation and peace, especially when religious conflict hit North Maluku in 1999. In the midst of the conflict involving Muslim and Christian communities, the values of Hibua Lamo became a unifying tool to restore fractured social relations. With this philosophy, the local community was able to rebuild harmonious inter-religious and ethnic relations. Hibua Lamo was re-declared as a symbol of unity by local traditional, religious and government leaders.

From a physical perspective, the Hibua Lamo Traditional House also has symbolic value. The building is octagonal in shape, symbolizing the openness of the eight cardinal directions. The four main doors reflect equality and equal access for everyone. The colors that dominate the building-red, yellow, black and white-represent the fighting spirit, intelligence, solidarity and purity of the people of North Halmahera. Field research conducted by Jesaya Banari (2020), a Tobelo culturalist, confirms that Hibua Lamo values do not only apply to the indigenous people of North Halmahera, but are also applied by migrants. For example, people from outside the region living in North Halmahera adopt these values as guidelines in their daily interactions. This reflects that the Hibua Lamo philosophy is inclusive and can serve as an example of social moderation in Indonesia. Thus, Hibua Lamo is not only a cultural heritage, but also a social capital that plays an important role in maintaining social harmony and stability in North Halmahera. Strengthening these values through education and socialization, both at the local and national levels, will help create a more tolerant and inclusive society. This philosophy is worthy of being used as a model to face the challenges of diversity in Indonesia and globally.

Religious moderation is a concept that emphasizes a balanced attitude in practicing religious beliefs, without extremism or fanaticism. In the Tobelo community, religious moderation has been practiced naturally for centuries through the Hibua Lamo philosophy. When major religions such as Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholicism began to enter the region, the Tobelo people welcomed them with tolerance, creating a space for peaceful dialogue between religious communities (Religious Moderation. Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2019). One of the core of the Hibua Lamo philosophy is the value of O'Odora, which means boundless love. In the life of the Tobelo people, this value becomes the main foundation in treating fellow humans regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, or social background. This love is not only practiced in relationships between individuals, but also becomes a guideline in social life. In fact, in the context of family, this value guides Tobelo people to support each other, including among family members who have different religious beliefs.

Research conducted by the North Halmahera Culture and Tourism Office (2021) revealed that more than 70% of families in this region have family members with diverse religious beliefs, such as Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism. However, this difference does not prevent them from maintaining family harmony. A clear example can be seen in the Tobelo extended family tradition, where important moments such as weddings, deaths, and religious holidays are celebrated together with respect and love. This boundless love is also reflected in the way Tobelo people help each other in their daily lives. For example, in the local tradition of marimoi (gotong royong), people from different religious backgrounds work together to build houses, manage fields or organize traditional events. The value of O'Odora motivates them to prioritize common interests over individual differences. This tradition is also one of the keys to the Tobelo community's success in building strong social harmony, even when facing major challenges such as the horizontal conflict in 1999.

This attitude of mutual support has become a way of life that has been passed down from generation to generation in North Halmahera. One concrete example is how the Tobelo community treats religious celebrations. In an interview with Jesaya Banari (2020), a Tobelo culturist, he explained that during Christmas celebrations, Muslim families often help their Christian siblings in preparing the needs of the event, such as providing halal food for Muslim guests. Conversely, during Eid celebrations, Christian families often help clean their Muslim relatives' homes or organize guests. Furthermore, O'Odora's spirit is also evident in the handling of social conflict in North Halmahera. When riots broke out in 1999 involving religious tensions, the Tobelo community successfully used the values of compassion to restore relations between communities. In a reconciliation meeting held at the Hibua Lamo Customary House, religious, customary and local government leaders reaffirmed the importance of compassion as the foundation of togetherness (Yin, R. (1997)).

In addition, the value of O'Adili, which means justice for all, is also an important principle in the life of the Tobelo people. In the context of Hibua Lamo, this justice is applied in the division of social roles and conflict resolution. For example, the selection of community leaders is done through consensus without distinguishing religious or ethnic backgrounds, which ensures that all parties feel valued and treated equally. In the Tobelo community's view, the Hibua Lamo traditional house is not only a physical place to gather, but also a spiritual symbol that represents justice, love and togetherness. This philosophy also serves as a tool to organize social life, such as regulating inter-group relations, resource distribution and resolving social conflicts. All this shows how local traditions can be moral guides that are relevant today (Soleman B. Taneko, 1993). The experience of the Tobelo community shows that religious moderation can not only be taught through government policies, but can also be lived in daily practice through local traditions. The Hibua Lamo philosophy proves that social harmony can be achieved when people uphold inclusive values, such as compassion, justice and respect for differences.

By promoting the values of Hibua Lamo to a wider scale, Indonesia can strengthen its social capital to face the challenges of harmony in the future. This philosophy is not only relevant to the people of Tobelo, but can also serve as an inspiration to other Indonesians striving to create harmony in diversity. As a cultural heritage, Hibua Lamo is living proof of how local values can contribute significantly to social stability and religious moderation. This research aims to explore the meaning and role of Hibua Lamo in realizing religious moderation and organizing the social life of the Tobelo community. This research provides theoretical and practical contributions in understanding the role of local cultural values as the foundation of social harmony and religious moderation, which is relevant in the context of multicultural Indonesia.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach (Muhajir Noem 1998). This approach was chosen to explore and deeply understand the philosophical values of Hibua Lamo as a social construction, a symbol of religious moderation, and a foundation in structuring the social life of the Tobelo, Galela, and Loloda ethnic communities in North Halmahera. A qualitative descriptive approach was deemed most appropriate as it allows in-depth exploration of cultural values and social practices manifested in the daily lives of these communities. The research was conducted in North Halmahera, particularly in the Tobelo, Galela and Loloda communities. These areas were chosen because they have strong historical and cultural relevance to the concept of Hibua Lamo. It is also the center of social, religious and customary activities rooted in the Hibua Lamo philosophy. The research subjects included key informants and supporters, selected by purposive sampling, with the following criteria: Local culturists or Individuals who understand the history and values of Hibua Lamo as part of the customary traditions of the people of North Halmahera. Religious leaders or Muslim, Protestant Christian and Catholic religious leaders who have insight into the role of religious moderation in the community. Local academics: Researchers or lecturers who study the culture and social life of the people of Tobelo, Galela, and Loloda and Bureaucrats: Local government leaders or figures involved in the management of culture and social life in the region (Suyanto and Sutinah 2007).

In-Depth Interviews Interviews were conducted directly with key informants, such as cultural, religious, academic and bureaucratic leaders. Questions focused on the philosophy of Hibua Lamo, the values of O'Odora, O'Adili, and O'Hayangi, and the role of Hibua Lamo in religious moderation and social structuring. The research subjects included key informants and supporters, selected by purposive sampling, with the following criteria: Local culturists or Individuals who understand the history and values of Hibua Lamo as part of the customary traditions of the people of North Halmahera. Religious leaders or Muslim, Protestant Christian and Catholic religious leaders who have insight into the role of religious moderation in the community. Local academics: Researchers or lecturers who study the culture and social life of the people of Tobelo, Galela, and Loloda and Bureaucrats: Local government leaders or figures involved in the management of culture and social life in the region (Suyanto and Sutinah 2007). In-Depth Interviews Interviews were

conducted directly with key informants, such as cultural, religious, academic and bureaucratic leaders. Questions focused on the philosophy of Hibua Lamo, the values of O'Odora, O'Adili, and O'Hayangi, and the role of Hibua Lamo in religious moderation and social structuring.

Participatory Observation Researchers directly observed social and cultural activities involving Hibua Lamo values, such as traditional meetings, religious celebrations, and mutual cooperation activities. This observation aims to understand how these values are applied in everyday life. And Document Study where researchers analyze related documents, such as historical archives, traditional books, government reports, and the results of previous studies that discuss Hibua Lamo. Data Analysis Techniques through Data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories. Source triangulation is done by comparing information from various informants. Method triangulation was done by combining interviews, observations and document studies. Theory triangulation was conducted by referring to the theories of religious moderation, social harmony, and structural functionalism.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 The Philosophy of Hibua Lamo as a Life Principle of Tobelo Ethnicity

An interview with Jesaya Banari, a Tobelo cultural expert, revealed that the Hibua Lamo is not just a physical traditional house, but a symbol that reflects the way of life of the people of Tobelo, Galela and Loloda. This philosophy is rooted in five main values:

- O'Odora (boundless love): Teaches that every individual should treat others with love regardless of background.
- O'Adili (fair to everyone): Emphasizes the importance of fairness, both in personal relationships and in community decision-making.
- O'Hayangi (love one another): Instilling a sense of empathy and care for others.
- O'Diai (correct or maintain the truth): Requires individuals to support each other to achieve the common good.
- O'Balihara (protect and nurture each other): Invites people to protect and maintain their social relationships.

These values have been part of the Tobelo people's lives for hundreds of years. The philosophy is not only applied in inter-tribal relations, but also serves as a guideline for coexisting with other ethnic and religious groups. Field observations show that these values are not only part of customary life, but are also applied in daily life. For example, in indigenous communities, extended family gatherings often begin with an interfaith prayer, where the traditional leader gives time to each religious group to offer prayers according to their beliefs. This shows the respect for plurality that is rooted in Hibua Lamo values. An interview with Mohamad Tapi Tapi, Vice Regent of North Halmahera, confirmed that the Hibua Lamo philosophy has created a strong culture of religious moderation. When major religions such as Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism were introduced to the Tobelo region, the local people accepted these religions peacefully. Traditional and religious leaders worked together to ensure the spread of religion was done without coercion and with respect for customs (Sihab. M.Quraish.2019).

Culturist Jesaya Banari explains that the Tobelo people not only accept these religions, but also integrate them with local values. For example, the tradition of gotong royong or marimoi is still practiced even though it involves community members from different religious backgrounds. When Muslims hold Eid celebrations, Christian families often help prepare halal food for Muslim guests. Conversely, Protestant and Catholic Christians involve Muslim families in Christmas celebrations out of respect for their beliefs. Observations during religious holiday celebrations show that the Tobelo community maintains this spirit of togetherness well. During Christmas, for example, Muslims help maintain order in the church, while during Eid al-Adha, Christians provide logistical assistance for the implementation of sacrifices. This behavior reflects that religious moderation in Tobelo has become part of the community's daily life. History records that the people of Tobelo, Galela and Loloda accepted major religions such as Islam, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism without conflict. The Hibua Lamo philosophy allows them to accommodate different religions within one community. This is manifested in the tradition of living together, where members of one family are often found practicing different religions but still living in harmony.

Religious moderation in North Halmahera is also reflected in interfaith support. For example, Christians often assist their Muslim brothers and sisters in the preparation of Eid al-Fitr, while Muslims celebrate Christmas by helping to organize events. In the context of social conflict in 1999, Hibua Lamo values were used as the basis for reconciliation between Muslim and Christian groups, resulting in peace and harmony that endures to this day. In interviews with several village heads in Tobelo, it was explained that Hibua Lamo also acts as a forum for deliberation to resolve various social issues. For example, a land conflict between two families of different religions was resolved through customary

mediation at the Hibua Lamo House. In this process, customary elders lead the discussion, and each party is given equal opportunity to express their opinions. Decisions are made based on the principles of justice and equality, which are rooted in the value of O'Adili. Field observations also show that Hibua Lamo is not only a place for customary deliberations, but also a center for other social activities, such as customary celebrations, skills training and cross-generational discussions. For example, Hibua Lamo House hosts traditional weaving training that involves participants from different religions and ethnicities. This shows that Hibua Lamo has become a symbol of inclusivity in modern life.

Hibua Lamo also serves as a forum for organizing the social life of the people of North Halmahera. This concept creates an egalitarian system, where community decisions are made through deliberation involving all groups, regardless of religion or social background. The appointment of leaders such as Jiko Makolano is based on consensus, not lineage or power. This philosophy has not only helped maintain social stability in the past, but also adapted to the needs of modern society. In everyday life, the values of Hibua Lamo are applied in the traditions of gotong royong (*marimoi*), conflict resolution, and other social activities. This allows the people of Tobelo to remain united amidst social change.

### 3.2 Religious Moderation as Local Cultural Heritage

Ethnic Tobelo in Hibua Lamo's perspective has a very respectful view of diversity in religious life. For them, religion is a personal right and profession that should not be intervened by anyone. When the propagators of Islam and Christianity came to the Tobelo and Galela regions, the local community provided an open space for them to spread their teachings peacefully and with mutual respect. Community leaders, including Deputy Regent of North Halmahera Muhlisi Tapi and Tobelo Muslim leader Fauji Daga, emphasized that the acceptance of these two religions was done peacefully without coercion or violence. People are given the freedom to choose their religion according to their beliefs, resulting in a relatively balanced composition of Islam, Christianity and Catholicism in the North Halmahera region.

Hibua Lamo's philosophy of life, such as O'Hayangi (loving each other) and O'Balihara (caring for each other), is the foundation for living a religious life. This can be seen in the practice of daily life, where families with members of different religions can live in harmony. According to Tobelo cultural and Christian leader Yeasaya K. Banari, the Hibua Lamo philosophy considers that the truth brought by all religions must be respected and used as a reference in social life. Religious tolerance is reflected in the celebration of religious holidays. As explained by Yamin Cokro, Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Halmahera Regency, the celebration of religious holidays such as Easter received appreciation from all circles, including direct participation from government officials of different religions. People of various religions celebrate and provide support in every religious celebration.

Although the presence of religion brings some restrictions in social interactions, especially regarding halal food for Muslims, the people of Tobelo and Galela are able to adapt well. Christian families, for example, pay close attention to the sensitivities of their Muslim brothers and sisters when it comes to the consumption of certain foods. They even arrange transportation routes for non-halal food so that it does not pass through Muslim neighborhoods. However, this harmony was disrupted when a religious horizontal conflict hit Maluku and North Maluku in 1999. The conflict, which began as a misunderstanding in Ambon, spread to North Halmahera, forcing many families of different religions to separate. However, this event made the community realize the importance of reviving the values of Hibua Lamo. Under the leadership of Regent Hein Namotemo, peace efforts were made by rebuilding the Hibua Lamo House in the center of Tobelo City. This building became a symbol of peace not only for the Tobelo community, but also for the entire North Halmahera community. The conflict ultimately strengthened the community's commitment to maintaining harmony in diversity through the noble values of Hibua Lamo.

### 3.3 The Philosophy Of Hibua Lamo As A Symbol Of Harmonious Life

The Hibua Lamo indigenous community is a local community that inhabits the North Halmahera Regency area. The community consists of several main sub-ethnic groups: Pagu, Towiliko, Modole, Boeng, Tobelo and Galela. Despite being made up of various ethnicities with different languages and cultures, they are united by a strong kinship system. The Pagu, Towiliko, Modole and Boeng ethnicities live in Kao sub-district, while Tobelo lives in Tobelo sub-district and Galela lives in Galela sub-district. Among all these sub-ethnic groups, Tobelo is the most dominant and is the center of government to this day.

In its organizational structure, Hibua Lamo consists of 10 hoana (villages) namely Modole, Pagu, Towiliko, Boeng, Lina, Huboto, Gura, Momulati, Towara, and Toweka. Each hoana is led by a hoana mahaeke (village leader). Their government system divides tasks based on the characteristics of each hoana. Hoana Momulati handles governance (O'Bobareta), Hoana Huboto takes care of welfare (wowango madoya), Hoana Gura handles belief/spiritual affairs (niata mangale), while the other five hoana namely Pagu, Modole, Towiliko, Towara and Toweka are responsible for security

(hoana magogoana). The highest leadership in the community is held by Jiko Makolano (king of the bay). Interestingly, this leadership system is not hereditary, but elected by the hoana mahaeké. This reflects the strong egalitarian values within the Hibua Lamo community, where there is no rigid social hierarchy. Although the Tobelo ethnicity is the largest sub-ethnicity, they do not dominate decision-making and are very respectful of other sub-ethnicities.

The cultural values of the Hibua Lamo community are reflected in the philosophy of O'Hayangi (loving each other) and O'Balihara (caring for each other). Religious tolerance is highly upheld, as can be seen from the harmonious life between adherents of different religions in one family. For example, non-Muslim families usually provide special tableware for Muslim family members. Modern developments show that the existence of Hibua Lamo is getting stronger with the formation of Sibua Lamo organizations spread in almost all regencies/cities in North Maluku. Currently, this organization is present in 8 Level Two Regencies, with Tobelo and Galela (Togale) ethnicities being the largest ethnicities in North Maluku Province. The success of the Hibua Lamo community in maintaining harmony amid diversity is a clear example of how ethnic, religious and cultural differences can coexist peacefully through a strong kinship system and noble cultural values.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Hibua Lamo indigenous people have proven themselves to be an amazing example of managing diversity within one community. Made up of various sub-ethnicities with different languages and cultures, they have managed to build a unique social system with a clear organizational structure through 10 hoana (villages) and an egalitarian leadership system under the Jiko Makolano who is elected rather than inherited. The foundation of their lives is built on fundamental values such as O'Hayangi (love each other), O'Balihara (care for and protect each other), and O'Banari (uphold the truth), which guide them in respecting differences and prioritizing deliberation in every decision-making. Religious tolerance is one of the most prominent aspects in the life of the Hibua Lamo community. They give full freedom in choosing their faith, respect religious differences even within the same family, support each other in celebrating religious holidays, and show sensitivity to each other's religious rules, especially in terms of halal food. Their social resilience was tested in the face of the 1999 horizontal conflict, where they were able to rise up and rebuild community harmony, with the Hibua Lamo House standing as a strong symbol of peace. Hibua Lamo's cultural heritage, with a value system passed down through generations and a philosophy of life that remains relevant to modern life, has become an exemplary model of harmony for other regions. Their ability to adapt to changing times without losing their basic values proves that ethnic, religious and cultural differences are not a barrier to creating a harmonious life. Their success in maintaining harmony and rising from conflict not only shows the resilience of their social system, but also serves as a valuable lesson on how to manage diversity in modern society.

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