

***Intercultural Communication Model of Tolaki Tribe In Multicultures Government  
Structure in South Konawe District, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia***

Ilham Gemiharto, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia  
Ryan Putra Gushendra, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

The Asian Conference on Cultural Studies 2016  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

This paper will examine the general and the background about intercultural communication model between native inhabitants of Tolaki tribe and immigrants in an order of cross cultures government. The research's goal is to examine and to show how tolerance interwoven among those different sides and honour towards customs could evoke better understanding among all parties in a government's structure.

Migration that happened in the past has increased the occurrence of intercultural among native inhabitants that connected directly with cultural characteristics of a large group of newcomers. In a half century, numerous life aspects are immediately controlled by the newcomers who have better knowledges and skills than the locals, including the government sector. Due to their characteristics, which are devoted and determined, it puts them in important positions in the government's structure. Eventhough there are some locals who occupied the position yet not many of them compare to the newcomers.

However, the situation doesn't inflict intercultural conflicts like what usually happens in other parts of Indonesia. The process of adaption and acculturation process that occurs gradually over decades between native inhabitants and newcomers is one of the reasons why the frictions had not occurred. Tolaki tribe has been known as a tribe which has local wisdom that gives a space for being tolerant towards newcomers, as long as the respect the customs of locals. The process of cultural acculturation that happens through intertribal marriages also gives a big contribute against the establishment of peace between them

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Government, Cultural Acculturation, Customs, Tolaki Tribe

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum

[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## **Introduction**

Cultural and communication style differences have the potential to cause many problems in a multicultural governance. Not only the differences, but also more importantly is the difficulty to accept it which cause serious problems and threaten the fluency of intercultural communication that can lead to national disintegration. Then, the awareness of cultural variations plus with the willingness to appreciate it will encourage relationship between cultures.

Developing cultural values in society will always start from local wisdom that appeared and developed in line with the development of the society itself. Pluralism of Indonesian citizens with the characteristics of cultural diversity can't automatically integrated to be a national culture with all the customs that exist, since it is still in a forming level. So, intercultural communication's role in a multicultural governance should be enhanced, including mutual respect to one another, and execution order according to legislation that is democratic and equitable. Civilization is always trying to survive relevantly with the times. Essentially, civilization that live and stick to a nation, rightly be a pride that is felt and shared by the whole nation. Culture comes as something that should be guarded and preserved together and something that unites.

Communication and government are two things that related to each other. Communication position in government as mentioned by Sieber et al. (1956) stated that in studying human communication system, someone needs to notice several beliefs and assumption which embraced by a citizen about the origin of a man, society, and a country. Government strategy needs communication strategy, so the meaning of communication is also depend on the paradigm that a country has chosen. Communication role in government has been discussed by experts, and a statement of communication has avital role in government is generally agreed upon. Rogers (1985) said that communication is basic thing for social change. The desired change is a change towards something better than before. Therefore, communication role in government should be associated with the direction or the purpose of a change, which means any kind of communication activity must be able to anticipate the purpose a government.

Local wisdom is a life values that grows and thrives in a society. In cultural life, local wisdom shows up to preserve the pureness of a culture and in this information era, it holds a very important role to connect mindsets between the past and the present in order to prepare life in the future. Local wisdom is also a foundation of a nation to find its identity. Tolaki is one of the tribes in Indonesia who live in some areas in Southeast Sulawesi, which some of them are Kendary City, South Konawe District and North Konawe District. Most of the people are working as farmers and cultivators. Tolaki itself derived from the word Tolohinagga which mean people who come from the sky.

Historically, Tolaki tribe is a part of Konawe's kingdom, which is located that was known as Unaaha. They set a rule called Siwole Mbatohu. In social life, Tolaki has a symbol that makes unite to resolve all problems that might emerge. It is called Kalosara which embodies to create a virtuous society and also to maintain order and welfare together and to interact closey with each other. There are elements that contain high value philosophy in a relationship with citizens. They made it as a

guidance to live their daily lives. Tolaki customs called it as Osara, a set of primary rules to adjust the relationship between people and law, individuals with groups, and groups and groups that must be obeyed. Due to many consequences if you try to violate ones, either physical punishments or curses

Osara taught Tolaki tribe to always obey the decisions with a purpose of persuading citizens to create peace and love in their lives, especially when they face problems with another citizens. The overall rules of socialization are not written, but they have already known, have obeyed from generation to generation, including those who have authority (Mokole/King). Other than Osara, they also know about Samaturu, which is a principle that focuses on creating a peaceful life, helping each other when they need one with pleasure. It is also a manifestation of a working together as a life philosophy of Tolaki tribe. Samaturu, medulu ronga mepokoaso, which means, in carrying out their perspective roles. A famous Indonesian proverb that said “*A trouble shared is a trouble halved*” is portraying the approaches of it

Besides the native inhabitants of Tolaki tribe, there are some areas where there are transmigrants who come from Bugis, Muna, Buton, and transmigrants from Java and Bali. Since their arrival years ago, the immigrants are able to improve and to bring forward the area in many aspects, such as financially and socially. Social condition of Tolaki tribe before and after the arrival of the transmigrants encounters frictions through assimilation and acculturation. Both of it have also appeared in development, where most of the villages whom already faced acculturation and assimilation of local and transmigrants are more advanced then the other.

Migration that happened in the past has increased the occurrence of intercultural among native inhabitants that connected directly with cultural characteristics of a large group of newcomers. In a half century, various life sectors are overpowered by newcomers who have better knowledges and skills than locals, including government sector. Due to their characteristics, which are devoted and determined, it puts them in important positions in the government’s structure. Eventhough there are some locals who occupied the position yet not many of them compare to the newcomers.

However, the situation doesn’t inflict intercultural conflicts like what usually happens in other parts of Indonesia. Tolaki tribe has been known as a tribe which has local wisdom that gives a space for being tolerant towards newcomers. Tolaki tribe has been known a tribe that has local wisdom to give some spaces for being tolerant towards newcomers as long as they respect their customs. The cultural acculturation process that happens through marriage intertribal also gives a big contribution of a harmony of life.

## Research Methods

The research method of intercultural communication model of Tolaki tribe in multicultures government structure in South Konawe District is qualitative research methodology. While the analysis method that is used to the research is case study analysis based on method, data, and source triangulation. Then, the collecting data method is through literatures and field research, such as observation, in depth interviews. Data collected in this research is divided into two, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is from the observation and in depth interviews with 20 research informants in the research's location, while secondary data is a data which obtained from websites, communication journals, and relevant books for the research.

Based on the assumptions above, this research is practically to examine and to review real life events experienced by the subjects holistically. It is also to give description and explanation towards intercultural communication model of Tolaki tribe in multicultural governments in South Konawe District. Data analysis technique that is used to it is refer to the concept from Miles and Huberman (1992: 20) which is interactive model that classify data analysis into three steps, which are Data Reduction, Display Data, and Verification.

In order to test the validity of the data, researchers are using triangulation techniques. Data triangulation is a data checking technique that is using another thing outside data to check or as a comparison to the data (Moleong, 2007: 330). Another test for the validity is an extension of the participation.

## Role of Local Wisdom 'Tolaki' Tribe as Solutions for Society

South Konawe District community which is multicultural because it consists of various tribes and ethnic certainly cause culture collisions among the indigenous population and immigrants. Local wisdom of Tolaki tribe became a solution of various social, cultural and political issues in South Konawe District community. Some of the problems arise among migrants and Tolaki indigenous tribes can be solved through with *kalosara* tradition.

One case that stands out is a land dispute between indigenous peoples and migrants. Conflicts over lands in this area began when the government puts migrants from Java and Bali in some areas in South Konawe district. The implementation of the transmigration program in South Konawe migrants is by placing citizens with a relatively large amount that has an impact on narrowing of traditional agricultural land. The existence of traditional agricultural lands such as *homa*, *anahoma*, *o'epe*, *Arano*, *lokua*, and *walaka* narrowed as most traditional farmer's arable land of Tolaki Tribe are mostly used for transmigration projects. This condition would cause inconvenience to the natives Tolaki tribe, so they asked for help *Pabitara* (indigenous tribe chief Tolaki) to solve this problem by tradition. (Karsadi, 2002)

The occurred land dispute case is then managed to get through regards to *kalosara*, facilitated by the South Konawe's Bupati. Technically, Bupati (official) called community leaders from both parties, to conduct meetings, subsequently formed mediation team consisting of two (2) community leaders of Tolaki. One person doing intensive communication with leaders and community groups of transmigrants and

others to communicate with community leaders of Tolaki tribe. Both figures attempt to identify the aspirations of both parties. The natives of the Tolaki tribe require soil that has been owned by the transmigrants should be returned to their rightful owner by canceling certificate, while the transmigrants call for recognition of land that has been owned and has been certified. Finally, solution agreed is land that has been owned by the transmigrant divided in two, one part remains the property of citizens of migrants, and a portion returned to the original owner of the legitimate customary. The main agreement executed in *mombesara* ceremony (Ceremony Cleaning State) by bringing *Kalosara* of the transmigrants under the guidance of a mediator from Tolaki community leaders, *kalosara* subsequently placed in the middle of both sides of the conflict. In this atmosphere the two sides expressed readiness to make peace and declare mutual forgiveness. Afterwards, it is no longer a conflict between the two communities. (Karsadi, 2002)

Marriage among Native Tolaki tribes with transmigrants is also carried out by presenting *kalosara*, especially if the bride is a Tolaki tribe's native in that case, by tribal customary the bride's family is entitled to demand a dowry to the groom, in the form of a piece of kaci cloth (silk) and a buffalo which must be handed to the bride before the wedding took place. If the groom refuses, he will be given by tradition sanctions in which socially ostracized by the entire community.

### **Tolaki Tribe's Cross Cultural Communication Model**

According to Sereno and Mortensen (in Mulyana, 2007), a model of communication is an ideal description of what is required for the communication process to occur, means that the communication process is done and understood as a process of delivering a message that involves feedback from the communicant as the party receiving the message to messages or information provided by the communicator, the process that which contained in the media. Communication elements related become integral in the process of delivery as a continuous mutual relationships, that communication is done in line with the linkage element of communication. Communication model becomes a real cornerstone in the process of contact between cultures, when a message is given by members of a culture and the recipient is a member of another culture. Culture is fully responsible for the entire communication behavior of individuals who have a meaning which is owned by each individual. (Mulyana, 2005: 20)

The cultural characteristics of a native Tolaki tribe that tends to be welcoming and friendly to newcomers with its local wisdom indicates openness to appreciate and understand the migrant cultures different from their original culture. Their principles of neighboring and working together to facilitate the process of adaptation and acculturation runs smoothly between them with settlers. But instead a native Tolaki tribe also requires migrants to abide their traditions, with the threat of sanctions if it refuses to obey them. Migrants who have been accepted by his presence certainly did not object to comply with tribal Tolaki traditions as long as it still within the limits of its capabilities.

Tolaki's communication culture gave birth to categories, concepts and labels produced by cultures intersect. Migrant's cultural similarities in perception allows a meaning thus similar to a social object or event. For example in the ways they communicate,

the state of communication, language, dialect, style of language, nonverbal behavior and response to interactions that constitute the elements of cross-cultural communication.

Tolaki tribal's perception in selecting, evaluating and organizing the stimuli from the external environment into a meaningful experience and generate belief systems and value systems they have run so far. They believe that everyone must respect the existence of others around them, if they want to be appreciated by others. The general belief is held by each Tolaki individual and reflects the characteristics of the related individual, and overall Tolaki tribe. This is reflected in the value system and the system of beliefs held by the Tolaki tribe.

The existence of tradition system as a value system that is believed to solve every problem faced by the Tolaki tribe shows a Tolaki tribal cultural orientation to God, man and the universe. That view also affects Tolaki tribal culture in shaping the structure of the family, tradition structure, social structure, and the structure of government. Kalosara respectable appearance as a last resort in solving societal Tolaki tribe problems is a form of agreement with the generally recognized which of course is the result of a process of learning from experience taught from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Mindset, mental processes, forms of reasoning, and approaches to problem solving contained in Tolaki tribal culture is an important component of culture that determine Kalosara vital role in providing solutions to problems.

### **Research Overview**

The location of this study took place in 10 (ten) traditional Tolaki tribal villages in South Konawe District. In each village where the study conducted, the research team interviewed a Tolaki tribal leader selected randomly (random). In addition to the traditional leaders in each village, the research team also interviewed the head of the village or other formal government authorities in each village. Thus, in this study there were 20 research informants, which consists of 10 traditional leaders and 10 village chief or village administration.

To implement triangulation stage, the research team interviewed the Head of Tourism and Culture South Konawe District as the leader of the regional organization (OPD) the executors of cultural affairs in Kabupaten Konawe Selatan and also Bupati as the Konawe Selatan's regional chairman.

### **Discussion of Research's Results**

Regarding the vital role of Kalo and Kalosara as tradition instruments which are recognized as solutions to various social problems, all informants (100%) stated the truth, since each face a problem that can not be resolved formally, then Kalosara would be the last resort very well respected by residents of Tolaki native tribes and settlers. All parties believe that refusing kalosara will only bring disaster and a greater calamity in the future, besides of course the social sanction received from the public in the form of exclusion, and also a huge fine.

According to informants from the government officials natives and visitors respect Kaloand Kalosara, so they tend to avoid the decline of kalosara and chose to resolve the problem by way of deliberation. Here, the role of formal government agencies such as the village head is very important in the effort to implement a village meeting to seek a variety of formal solutions to various problems faced by the community.

Cross-cultural communication model conducted by Native tribes of Tolaki is reflected in their attitudes and daily behavior which tend to be friendly and open to strangers this simplify village officials to find the best solutions to the problems for them. As long as the solution offered is not considered detrimental to them and not contrary to the tradition, they are usually willing to accept and implement these solutions.

In the area of governance starting from desa, kecamatan to kabupaten. Many important positions such as village heads, district, county department heads and even regents occupied by settlers. This is certainly an inconvenience to indigenous Tolaki tribes who have inhabited the region since hundreds or even thousands of years ago. But apparently such inconveniences do not necessarily lead to social conflict as in other regions in Indonesia. Communication patterns of indigenous Tolaki tribal communities that are open to entrants provides a distinct advantage for them, which in the process of their interaction with migrants making them understand the mindset and work ethic of migrants.

In the traditional villages of the Tolaki tribe who have experienced the intersection of culture with a migrants population, especially migrants from Java and Bali, the construction progress can be seen through naked eye, through the availability of better infrastructure, ranging from roads, bridges and other public service facilities, such as village halls, health centers and education facilities. Good infrastructure certainly have a positive impact on the society's economic wheels, including indigenous people of Tolaki tribe. With the moving society's economic wheels induce the escalation of welfare and ultimately capable of eliminating social jealousy and discomfort experienced by a native Tolaki tribe.

It can be seen from the increasing number of indigenous people who became Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the sector of the economy. Later in the government sector are also growing a number of Native Tolaki tribes occupying important positions such as district and department heads. Various efforts made by the district government to maintain and preserve local Tolaki wisdom rate through various programs that can have a positive result. One program stands out is the Mandara Mandidoha Village Program legalized through Local Regulation No. 22 Year 2013 about the Mandara Mandidoha village or Smart Healthy Village with the aim of spurring the development of Active Alert Village program in Kabupaten Konawe Selatan.

Mandara Mandidoha Village Program is adapting the principles of Tolaki ethnic local wisdom to cooperate and work together with the surrounding neighbors, through philosophy *samaturu*, *medulu*, *rongamepokoaso*, which means that the Tolaki people in carrying out their respective roles have always come together, work together, gives mutual help and mutual assistance with each other.

Through the Mandara Mandidoha Village Program there has been eleven villages that became a pilot project to duplicate the eleven other villages. Implementation of the program dissemination is done directly by the Bupati of the entire apparatus of

government in Kabupaten Konawe Selatan, and also to a wider audience, such as: non-formal community leaders, donors, campus, and other related parties. After going through the process of developing a program for 2 (two) years, one of the villages from Mandara Mandidoha Village Program became a pilot project which is the Desa Anggondara Kecamatan Palangga made it as one of the three villages with the best category in the program development of rural active standby level in Southeast Sulawesi province. Regarding these achievements, some principles of indigenous Tolaki tribes later adapted in various other government programs such as the 'Keluarga Berencana' and village midwives in Kabupaten Konawe.

In the area of governance, South Konawe's government which has a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as stakeholders have an important role through the establishment of coordinated policies in the form of the adoption of legislation or Bupati's decisions through the Regional Regulation (Perda). Additionally Bupati also establishes a coordination mechanism among agencies involved in any government program and establish community development communication forums starting from the village level to the district level. By adopting several kinds of local wisdom from Tolaki tribes which are recognized by the entire community in South Konawe District that is very diverse, it has proven to be able to tie the relationship and cooperation between them in implementing various community development process.

## **Conclusion**

From the explanation of the research and the analysis, there are few things that could be concluded: (1) Intercultural communication model of Tolaki is based on principles of Tolaki tribe's local wisdom, such as samaturu, medulu rongga mepokoaso, which is in carrying out their respective roles, respect each other, working together with all groups of the citizens without differentiate the ethnic background and their cultures in order to avoid conflicts that usually happens in heterogeneous citizens and multicultures; (2) Although having different cultural values with the newcomers, local inhabitants want to imitate positive things from them, such as being devoted and being determined. The newcomers don't hesitate to share their knowledges and experiences to local people of Tolaki, especially in agriculture, animal husbandry, and trading. With a new knowledge and new skills, many local people of Tolaki who open their own business to increase economy. Likewise the newcomers are willing to respect and to obey the customs of Tolaki through Kalo and Kalosara; (3) Many local wisdoms of Tolaki are adapted in various development programs, like Desa Mandara Mandidoha in South Konawe District which legalized through Peraturan Daerah No. 22 in 2013 about Desa Mandara Mandidoha. Likewise in family planning and other development programs; (4) Many problems between locals and newcomers can be solved with Kalosara, which they obey and respect, start from marriage problem until government issues.



## References

- Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Konawe Selatan. (2014). *Kabupaten Konawe Selatan Dalam Angka*. Andoolo: BPS Konawe Selatan.
- Denzin, Norman K. dan Guba, Egon. (2001). *Teori dan Paradigma Penelitian Sosial; Pemikiran dan Penerapannya*, Penyunting: Agus Salim. Yogyakarta: PT Tiara Wacana.
- Dinas Kesehatan Provinsi Sulawesi Tenggara. (2007). *Pedoman Pelaksanaan Desa Siaga di Sulawesi Tenggara*. Kendari: Dinas Kesehatan Sulawesi Tenggara.
- Faidi, Ahmad. (2013). *Suku Tolaki, Suku Seribu Kearifan*. Makassar: Arus Timur.
- Hafid, Anwar. (2009). *Kalosara Sebagai Instrumen Utama dalam Kehidupan Sosial Budaya Suku Tolaki Di Sulawesi Tenggara*. Kendari: Universitas Haluoleo.
- Hafid, Anwar; Safar, Misran. (2008). *Kajian Pengembangan Kebudayaan di Kota Kendari*. Kendari: FKIP Unhalu.
- Idaman. (2012). *Kalosara sebagai Medium Resolusi Konflik Pertanahan pada Masyarakat Tolaki Di Kabupaten Konawe Selatan*. Kendari: Fisip Unhalu.
- Karsadi, (2002). *Sengketa Tanah dan Kekerasan di Daerah Transmigrasi: Studi Kasus di Lokasi Pemukiman Transmigrasi di Kabupaten Kendari Sulawesi Tenggara*. Disertasi Doktor Sosiologi, PPS UGM Yogyakarta.
- Kurniawan, Arif. (2007). *Analisis Keberhasilan Proses Program Desa Siaga*. Jurnal Pembangunan Pedesaan Vol 7 Tahun 2007.
- Mazi, Ali. (2004). *Peranan Nilai-nilai Budaya Lokal dalam Pelaksanaan Pembinaan Teritorial di Sulawesi Tenggara*. Jakarta: Puspenad.
- Moleong, Lexy J. (2005). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Penerbit Rosda.
- Pemerintah Daerah Provinsi Sulawesi Tenggara. (2013). *Profil Kabupaten Konawe Selatan Tahun 2013*
- Peraturan Daerah Kabupaten Konawe Selatan No. 22 Tahun 2013, Tentang Desa Mandara Mendidoha (Desa Sehat Cerdas)
- Siebert et.al, (1956). *Four Theory of Press*. London: Sage Publishing.

**Contact email:** [ilhamgemiharto1@gmail.com](mailto:ilhamgemiharto1@gmail.com)