

## ***Malulo* Tradition in the Wedding Ceremony of Tolaki People in North Kolaka Perspective of Urf**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Malulo, a traditional dance of the Tolaki people, is integral to various religious and social activities such as harvests, weddings, and aqiqah. This research explores the cultural significance of the Malulo dance in Kecamatan Lambai, Kabupaten Kolaka Utara, and examines its alignment with Islamic values, particularly regarding interactions between men and women. The study addresses whether the physical contact in the dance contradicts Islamic teachings and offers solutions to preserve the tradition while adhering to religious principles. Using a qualitative approach, interviews with religious leaders, cultural practitioners, and community members were conducted, alongside an analysis of Islamic legal perspectives on *urf* (customs). The findings show that while Malulo fosters community cohesion and has deep cultural roots, the practice of hand-holding between non-mahram men and women is seen as inconsistent with Islamic teachings. The research suggests modifications, such as separating men and women during the dance, to preserve the tradition without violating religious values. The study's originality lies in its attempt to reconcile a local cultural tradition with Islamic jurisprudence, offering a balanced solution that respects both heritage and religious principles. This approach highlights the broader importance of harmonizing cultural practices with religious norms, particularly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, and could serve as a model for resolving similar conflicts elsewhere.

**Key Words:** Malulo Tradition, Wedding Ceremony, Perspective of 'Urf.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sulawesi Tenggara is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, each with its own unique customs and traditions. The presence of ethnicities like the Tolaki,

Muna, Bugis, Buton, and Wakatobi islands reflects the rich cultural diversity that has shaped the social fabric of this region. Communities across Indonesia continue to develop distinct cultural identities shaped by historical interactions between various ethnic groups (Ilyas & Al-Rasyid, 2018). This cultural variety can be seen in traditions such as *Malulo*, a significant dance ritual passed down through generations, symbolizing continuity between the past and present (Sztompka, 1991) (Alim et al., 2022). In particular, the tradition of *Malulo* reflects local values of unity and cooperation, demonstrating how these customs remain central to social life in Sulawesi Tenggara. Hence, the cultural diversity of this region remains evident in traditional practices that continue to be observed and cherished.

Numerous studies highlight the significance of the *Malulo* tradition within the context of Southeast Sulawesi's cultural landscape. For example, Muhlis (Muhlis, 2020) discusses the enduring nature of *Malulo* as a customary practice in the Tolaki community, particularly in Pakue district. Additionally, Rosni (Rosni, 2017) explores the role of *Malulo* in local religious outreach efforts in Kolaka Utara, showing its adaptability. Research by Alim (Alim, 2017) further reveals how *Lulo*, another traditional dance, has shifted from a sacred to a more secular function, underscoring changes in cultural meaning across time. In the context of weddings, Hapida (Hapida, 2022) explains the mixed reactions of society toward *Malulo*, with some supporting its practice and others opposing it based on religious concerns. Other scholars, such as (Nasir et al., 2019), focus on the tension between preserving this dance and adhering to Islamic values, particularly when it involves men and women dancing together. Muslimin (Muslimin, 2018) suggests a compromise by separating the genders during the dance to maintain cultural authenticity while observing religious norms. Lastly, Tolapa (Tolapa, 2024) discusses the role of traditions in shaping societal structures, reinforcing that *Malulo* reflects community values of unity and cooperation. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of *Malulo*'s cultural, social, and religious significance in Southeast Sulawesi.

This research aims to analyze the *Malulo* tradition in the context of pre-wedding celebrations in Lambai District through the lens of 'urf. By examining the ritual from a perspective rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, this study will assess whether *Malulo* aligns with the principles of 'urf *shahih* (valid customs) or 'urf *fasid* (invalid customs). Understanding the classification of *Malulo* is critical to evaluating its role in the community and its adherence to religious principles. (E) Previous studies have touched upon the religious aspects of *Malulo*, yet few have provided a thorough analysis using the framework of 'urf, which refers to customs observed by a society that foster peace and harmony (Efrinaldi et al., 2022). This study will build upon these works by considering whether the *Malulo* tradition, in

its current form, should be maintained as a valid social custom or adapted to align more closely with Islamic legal standards. Ultimately, this research will offer a nuanced interpretation of Malulo's place within both local culture and Islamic teachings.

Evaluating the Malulo tradition through the lens of *'urf* is essential to determine its compatibility with Islamic values. *'Urf*, as a tool of analysis in Islamic jurisprudence, allows for the integration of cultural practices into religious frameworks, provided they do not contradict foundational religious texts. This balance between cultural continuity and religious adherence is vital for communities seeking to maintain their traditions while observing Islamic law (Efrinaldi et al., 2022). According to scholars, the classification of customs into *'urf shahih* or *'urf fasid* provides clear guidelines for determining which traditions should be preserved or reformed (Syatar et al., 2023). The debate over whether Malulo should continue as is, or be modified to separate men and women during the dance, highlights the ongoing tension between cultural heritage and religious observance (Nasir et al., 2019; Muslimin, 2018). Analyzing this tension through the concept of *'urf* enables a deeper understanding of how communities can adapt cultural practices without losing their essence. Therefore, applying *'urf* as a framework provides a valuable lens through which to evaluate the evolution of traditions like Malulo in contemporary society.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive field research design aimed at providing in-depth insights into the observable actions, speech, or writings of individuals, groups, or communities. The research was conducted in Kecamatan Lambai, Kabupaten Kolaka Utara, selected due to the researcher's familiarity with the local community, which facilitated data collection. Additionally, the study utilizes a socio-legal approach combined with a comparative analysis of local traditions and *'urf*, which is essential for understanding the interaction between law and society. The approach enables a comprehensive exploration of how local customs intersect with Islamic legal traditions, offering a nuanced perspective on the relationship between cultural practices and religious norms (Najib, 2020). This combination of sociological and legal analysis provides a robust framework for examining the role of tradition in modern society. Hence, the research design is well-suited for an in-depth exploration of cultural and legal dynamics in the community.

Data collection in this study involved both primary and secondary sources, utilizing various qualitative methods. Primary data were gathered directly from the community through systematic observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. These methods allowed for a detailed understanding of the

community's practices and perspectives. Systematic observation was used to capture the behaviors and interactions related to the Malulo tradition, while semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to explore participants' views in greater depth. Documentation, including photographs and written records, complemented these methods by providing tangible evidence of the cultural practices being studied. Secondary data were gathered from relevant documents and literature, offering additional context to support the primary findings. Together, these data collection methods ensured a comprehensive understanding of the Malulo tradition in the community.

The data analysis in this research was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved simplifying and organizing the vast amount of information collected from observations, interviews, and documents to focus on the most relevant themes. This process enabled the researcher to concentrate on the critical aspects of the Malulo tradition and its legal implications. Data were then presented in a coherent and systematic format, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and trends within the information. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the findings, providing a clear and concise interpretation of the research results. These steps ensured that the data were processed in a manner that was both accurate and easy to understand. This structured approach to data analysis helped deliver meaningful insights into the relationship between local customs and Islamic law.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *The Social Setting of Malulo's Emergence Ahead of a Wedding Party*

The findings indicate that the tradition of Tari Lulo, rooted in the Tolaki culture of Southeast Sulawesi, remains a vital cultural practice, particularly in Kecamatan Lambai. This dance is not merely an artistic expression but is intricately linked to various significant community events such as weddings, harvests, and other celebrations (Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Sulawesi Selatan, 2014). Historically, it emerged from agricultural activities, particularly the tradition of trampling rice during harvest, which later evolved into a form of dance (Melamba, 2012). The dance's transformation from an agrarian practice to a cultural symbol reflects its deep connection with the livelihood of the Tolaki people. Thus, the findings suggest that Tari Lulo has evolved but continues to serve as an important cultural marker that celebrates unity and gratitude.

Tari Lulo serves not only as a form of entertainment but as a medium of social cohesion and communication within the Tolaki community. It is performed in a circular formation, symbolizing unity and inclusiveness, with participants of all ages and backgrounds joining the dance. Abd. Rahman, a Tolaki cultural figure, emphasized that the dance teaches lessons of solidarity and togetherness, drawing from the communal efforts involved in farming and other group

activities (Rahman, 2024). Despite changes over time, such as the shift from traditional gong instruments to modern band or electronic music, the core values of unity, togetherness, and gratitude have been preserved in the practice. This shows the adaptability of Tari Lulo to modern contexts while maintaining its cultural significance.

The implications of these findings are significant for understanding how cultural practices like Tari Lulo can promote social unity. As the dance continues to be performed in various public events, it fosters a sense of belonging and continuity among the Tolaki people, bridging generational gaps and fostering inclusivity. The social function of Tari Lulo, which welcomes participants regardless of rank, caste, or religious background, serves as a powerful tool for social integration, especially in multicultural settings. This shows that traditional dances can be more than heritage preservation; they can also act as mechanisms for community-building. Therefore, the persistence of Tari Lulo in modern times underscores its role in strengthening communal ties.

Moreover, the endurance of Tari Lulo highlights the resilience of local traditions in the face of modernization. Despite the advent of modern instruments and the shift in performance contexts, the core values and social significance of the dance have remained intact. This suggests that cultural traditions can adapt to contemporary realities without losing their essential meaning. By preserving its fundamental elements, Tari Lulo continues to play an essential role in reinforcing Tolaki cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. Thus, the ongoing practice of Tari Lulo demonstrates the dynamic nature of tradition, showing how cultural practices can evolve yet retain their underlying principles.

While the research provides valuable insights into the social and cultural significance of Tari Lulo, several limitations were identified. The study was limited to Kecamatan Lambai, which may not fully represent variations in how Tari Lulo is practiced in other Tolaki communities across Southeast Sulawesi. Additionally, the reliance on interviews with local cultural figures may have introduced a degree of bias, as their perspectives may reflect personal or community-specific experiences. Broader research encompassing more regions and diverse participant perspectives would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Tari Lulo's significance across different contexts. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, acknowledging the geographical and participant limitations of the study.

Tari Lulo should explore its role in promoting intercultural dialogue and integration in more diverse settings. Expanding the scope to include areas with more heterogeneous populations could provide valuable insights into how traditional dances like Tari Lulo are used to foster unity in multicultural communities. Additionally, future studies could examine the impact of

modernization on other traditional cultural practices within the Tolaki community. Investigating how technological advancements and globalization influence cultural preservation and adaptation would deepen our understanding of the balance between tradition and modernity. Such research would offer a broader perspective on the evolving role of cultural traditions in contemporary society.

#### *Implementation of Malulo Presentation at Wedding Parties*

The Molulo dance holds a significant cultural role in Tolaki wedding ceremonies, serving as both a form of entertainment and a symbolic representation of unity, tradition, and social interaction (Akib, 2017). The dance steps are simple, involving hand-holding and stepping to the rhythm of modern music, but the meaning behind the dance remains profound, reflecting social values such as respect, cooperation, and togetherness. The integration of Molulo into wedding ceremonies reflects its broader role in community-building and maintaining cultural continuity, with participants from all age groups, genders, and backgrounds taking part. The simplicity and inclusiveness of the dance are key factors that contribute to its sustained popularity, despite the passage of time and the influence of modern cultural elements.

The role of Molulo in Tolaki wedding ceremonies demonstrates its function as a living cultural practice that preserves social values while adapting to modernity (Hendrawan, 2021). The shift from traditional instruments like the gong to modern dangdut music signifies how the community has embraced change, yet the dance's core values of unity and inclusion remain intact. This balance of tradition and adaptation suggests that Molulo plays a vital role in reinforcing community bonds, especially during important social gatherings like weddings. The implications are far-reaching, as Molulo not only serves as a cultural artifact but also as a medium for intergenerational learning, ensuring that younger generations understand and uphold their cultural heritage.

The social significance of Molulo is evident in its ability to bring people together from different parts of the community. By transcending boundaries of age, gender, and social status, Molulo acts as a unifying force in Tolaki society. It provides an opportunity for social interaction, where participants can reconnect with distant relatives, form new social bonds, and experience shared joy. The dance fosters a sense of belonging and continuity, reinforcing social cohesion while celebrating significant life events like weddings.

Beyond its social function (Sahnir, 2022), Molulo serves as an educational tool that imparts ethical and aesthetic values. The physical act of holding hands, for instance, symbolizes cooperation and mutual respect, while the simple yet graceful movements convey a sense of harmony and order. These elements teach participants and onlookers about proper social conduct and the importance of

collaboration in community life. As a medium for transmitting cultural norms and values, Molulo plays a crucial role in shaping the moral and ethical framework of the community, particularly for younger generations.

One of the key factors contributing to Molulo's vitality is the widespread community participation it encourages. The absence of rigid rules regarding attire or specific roles ensures that anyone can join, making the dance accessible and enjoyable for all. The interaction between dancers and spectators, such as the exchange of money (*saweran*) and verbal encouragement, enhances the communal experience and deepens social bonds. This inclusive and interactive nature of Molulo cements its role as a cornerstone of community events, where social boundaries are blurred, and relationships are strengthened.

### **An Assessment of 'Urf on the Practice of the Malulo Tradition in Kecamatan Lambai, Kabupaten Kolaka Utara**

The practice of Malulo in the Tolaki community reflects deep cultural and symbolic meanings tied to unity, cooperation, and social interaction. The act of holding hands during the lulo dance symbolizes mutual support, especially between men and women, illustrating their roles in life. The movement of stepping two times to the right and left, forward and backward, represents the need for continuous effort in achieving success and promoting health. The circular formation of the dance highlights the importance of unity and inclusion. Additionally, from an Islamic perspective, Malulo aligns with Islamic values of unity, community, and maintaining good relationships, as it serves as a means for social interaction and strengthening ties within the community.

**Table 1.** Symbols and Their Cultural/Islamic Significance in the Malulo Tradition

Symbol	Meaning	Cultural/Islamic Significance
Holding Hands	Mutual support between men and women, reflecting friendship and partnership.	Symbolizes the harmony in relationships, emphasizing unity and peace.
Stepping Movements	Continuous effort toward goals, promoting both perseverance and physical well-being.	Highlights the importance of consistent action in achieving success.
Circular Formation	Represents unity and inclusiveness, allowing everyone to participate.	Encourages collective harmony and social interaction across societal divisions.

Source: Authors interpretation

The symbolism embedded in Malulo reflects the values of unity, effort, and health within the Tolaki community. Holding hands during the dance signifies mutual reliance, while the structured movements emphasize perseverance and

balance in life. The circular dance formation symbolizes inclusivity, reinforcing communal ties. This cultural practice, when viewed through an Islamic lens, supports principles of community bonding and social harmony, which are also emphasized in Islamic teachings. Malulo's role in fostering social ties reflects the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on the importance of maintaining strong relationships within the community.

The findings reveal that the Malulo dance in the Kecamatan Lambai community is deeply rooted in cultural practices that emphasize social harmony and gratitude. While traditionally an expression of joy and community spirit, the practice is now seen as having congruence with Islamic values, particularly in fostering *silaturahmi* (social bonds) and hospitality (Idris, 2024). However, the act of physical contact between men and women who are not mahram during the dance raises concerns from an Islamic perspective. Although the cultural significance of the dance is clear, it faces challenges in fully aligning with Islamic teachings, particularly regarding gender interactions (Dalle, 2024).

The cultural analysis highlights that the Malulo dance serves as an integrative tool for social interaction in the Tolaki community (Rifqi, 2021). However, the integration of religious values is seen as incomplete, particularly in the context of Islamic law, which discourages physical contact between non-mahram men and women. This creates tension between the cultural practice and the religious norms, leading to a categorization of the dance as *'urf fasid* (corrupt custom) by scholars. Nevertheless, its role in strengthening social relationships and fostering unity resonates with some of the key teachings of Islam, presenting a complex interaction between culture and religion.

The results suggest that cultural practices such as the Malulo dance hold significant value for community cohesion and social interaction. The practice promotes the values of unity, hospitality, and social bonding, which are integral to both the cultural and religious life of the community (Al Farisi et al., 2023). As such, the implications extend beyond mere social activity, offering a platform for community members to engage in shared experiences that reinforce solidarity. However, the practice's implications for Islamic legal principles, particularly regarding physical contact, necessitate a careful consideration of how to preserve cultural traditions while aligning them with religious norms.

Another implication is the potential for cultural adaptation (Yamamah, 2016).. While Malulo may not fully align with Islamic law, its core values of unity and respect are compatible with Islamic teachings. The challenge lies in modifying the tradition to avoid elements that conflict with sharia. For instance, separating men and women during the dance or ensuring minimal physical contact could allow the tradition to continue in a way that honors both cultural and religious



values. This adaptation could serve as a model for reconciling local customs with broader religious principles in other contexts.

From an *'urf* (customary law) perspective, Malulo could initially be considered a form of *'urf fasid* because it contradicts some key Islamic principles, particularly concerning male-female interactions (Aziz et al., 2020). However, the fact that it promotes values like unity and social bonding means it contains elements that could be aligned with Islamic values, making it possible to transform the custom into *'urf sahih* (valid custom) (Pabbajah et al., 2023). The distinction between these two forms of *'urf* is critical in assessing how to adjust cultural practices like Malulo to ensure they do not conflict with Islamic law while preserving their social significance (Joesoef, 2020).

The tradition of Malulo also highlights a broader issue in Islamic law (Mutawali, 2022)—how to balance respect for local customs with adherence to religious principles. According to Islamic legal theory, customs can be considered valid if they do not contradict core religious obligations. In this case, the physical contact in Malulo is problematic, but the cultural intention behind the practice—strengthening community ties—is in line with Islamic values. By removing the elements that conflict with Islamic law (Mutawali, 2021), such as physical touch between non-mahram men and women, Malulo could evolve into a practice that is both culturally meaningful and religiously acceptable.

The reliance on interviews and interpretations that are context-specific to the Kecamatan Lambai community. The views of local religious leaders and community members may not represent the broader perspectives of Islamic scholars or other cultural contexts where Malulo is practiced. Additionally, the study does not explore the perspectives of women involved in the dance, which may provide valuable insights into gender dynamics in both cultural and religious practices. Future studies may benefit from a more diverse range of viewpoints, including those of Islamic legal scholars and women in the community.

## CONCLUSION

The research revealed that the Malulo dance, a significant cultural tradition in Kecamatan Lambai, Kabupaten Kolaka Utara, holds strong social and cultural value. However, the practice involves physical contact between men and women who are not mahram, which conflicts with Islamic teachings. Islamic scholars categorize this practice as *'urf fasid*, meaning it is a harmful custom that can lead to moral issues (*fitnah*) and violates Islamic principles. Modifications, such as separating men and women during the dance, have been suggested to ensure that the tradition can continue in a manner that aligns with Islamic values, transforming it into *'urf sahih*. One of the key strengths of this study lies in its balanced approach to analyzing the tension between cultural preservation and

religious adherence. The research highlights the importance of cultural traditions like the Malulo dance while critically assessing how they can be harmonized with Islamic values. By drawing from both interviews with local leaders and Islamic legal perspectives, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how religious and cultural norms intersect. This approach not only respects the cultural significance of Malulo but also offers practical solutions for adapting the tradition in line with religious teachings. The study's limitations stem primarily from its focus on a single community and the reliance on local interviews. While the research provides valuable insights into the perceptions of local religious leaders, it does not account for broader Islamic legal perspectives or the views of women participants in the dance. Furthermore, the study does not explore how other communities in different regions might perceive or modify similar traditions. Future research could expand the scope by including a wider range of perspectives and examining how other cultural practices are adapted to comply with Islamic principles.

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