

## **Hybrid Solidarity and Ritual Resistance among the Parmalim Indigenous Belief Community in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how the Parmalim community, an indigenous Batak Toba belief system, maintains social cohesion and develops institutional adaptation amid structural state discrimination against indigenous belief identities. The study is important because indigenous belief communities in Indonesia continue to experience administrative, social, and political marginalization within religion-state relations. This research employs a qualitative approach using an embedded case study design that combines ethnographic methods and critical discourse analysis to understand ritual practices, social solidarity, and institutional adaptation within the Parmalim community in North Sumatra. Data were collected through twelve months of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis concerning ritual practices, *Ugamo Malim* organizational structures, and state policies related to the recognition of indigenous beliefs, and were analyzed thematically using Émile Durkheim's theory of solidarity. The findings reveal that mechanical solidarity within the Parmalim community is maintained through collective rituals such as *Marari Sabtu* and *Sipaha Lima*, which strengthen collective identity while simultaneously functioning as forms of symbolic resistance against dominant religious structures. At the same time, organic solidarity develops through the establishment of formal organizations, legal advocacy, and collaboration with civil society networks to pursue recognition of indigenous belief rights. These findings indicate that mechanical and organic solidarity do not operate linearly but coexist simultaneously in the form of "hybrid solidarity." The study highlights the importance of understanding ritual practices and institutional adaptation as strategies used by indigenous communities to sustain their social and political existence within pluralistic societies. This research also extends the Durkheimian framework by demonstrating that social solidarity in indigenous communities cannot be separated from state power relations and postcolonial dynamics. The originality of this study lies in the development of the concepts of "hybrid solidarity" and "ritual resistance" to explain the relationship between cultural practices, social cohesion, and the struggle for recognition among indigenous belief communities in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Durkheimian solidarity; hybrid solidarity; indigenous community; Parmalim; ritual resistance.

### **abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana komunitas Parmalim sebagai sistem kepercayaan adat Batak Toba mempertahankan kohesi sosial dan melakukan adaptasi kelembagaan di tengah diskriminasi struktural negara terhadap identitas kepercayaan adat. Penelitian ini penting dilakukan karena komunitas kepercayaan adat di Indonesia masih menghadapi marginalisasi administratif, sosial, dan politik dalam relasi agama-negara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus *embedded* (terintegrasi) yang menggabungkan metode etnografi dan analisis wacana kritis untuk memahami praktik ritual, solidaritas sosial, dan adaptasi kelembagaan komunitas Parmalim di Sumatera Utara. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif selama dua belas bulan, wawancara semi-terstruktur, focus group discussion, dan analisis dokumen terhadap praktik ritual, struktur organisasi *Ugamo Malim*, serta kebijakan negara terkait pengakuan kepercayaan adat, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan perspektif solidaritas Émile Durkheim. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa solidaritas mekanik dalam komunitas Parmalim tetap dipertahankan melalui ritual kolektif seperti *Marari*

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*Sabtu* dan *Sipaha Lima* yang berfungsi memperkuat identitas bersama sekaligus menjadi bentuk resistensi simbolik terhadap dominasi keagamaan mayoritas. Pada saat yang sama, solidaritas organik berkembang melalui pembentukan organisasi formal, advokasi hukum, dan kolaborasi dengan jaringan masyarakat sipil untuk memperjuangkan pengakuan hak-hak kepercayaan adat. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa solidaritas mekanik dan organik tidak bergerak secara linear, melainkan hadir secara simultan dalam bentuk “hibriditas solidaritas.” Implikasi penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya memahami praktik ritual dan adaptasi kelembagaan sebagai strategi komunitas adat dalam mempertahankan eksistensi sosial dan politik di masyarakat pluralistik. Penelitian ini juga memperluas kerangka Durkheimian dengan menunjukkan bahwa solidaritas sosial dalam komunitas adat tidak dapat dilepaskan dari relasi kuasa negara dan dinamika pascakolonial. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada pengembangan konsep “hibriditas solidaritas” dan “resistensi ritual” untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara praktik budaya, kohesi sosial, dan perjuangan pengakuan komunitas kepercayaan adat di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Solidaritas Durkheimian; solidaritas hibrida; komunitas adat; Parmalim; perlawanan ritual.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, indigenous movements across the world have intensified in response to cultural marginalization, state assimilation policies, and modernization pressures (Coulthard & Alfred, 2014). UNESCO reports indicate that indigenous communities worldwide continue to face serious challenges in preserving their belief systems amid the dominance of institutional religions and expanding state intervention (Stimac, 2022). This condition is also evident in Indonesia, where the state has historically privileged six administratively recognized religions, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, while indigenous belief systems have often occupied an unequal and contested position within civil administration (Aditya & Al-Fatih, 2017; Steenbrink & Aritonang, 2008). Although the Indonesian Constitution formally guarantees religious freedom, bureaucratic practices frequently contradict constitutional principles (Anwar & Baskoro, 2022). Consequently, indigenous belief communities often experience a structural paradox in which legal recognition exists normatively but remains inconsistently implemented within everyday administrative practice.

The Parmalim community, an indigenous Batak Toba belief group practicing *Ugamo Malim*, illustrates this paradox clearly. Approximately 5,026 Parmalim adherents live across Medan, Simalungun, Samosir, Toba, and North Tapanuli Regencies (Leandha, 2016). The community preserves a spiritual tradition emphasizing morality, spirituality, ancestral teachings, and harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and the divine. Despite its historical and cultural significance as one of Indonesia's surviving indigenous belief systems, the Parmalim community continues to face existential pressures. Community members encounter barriers in accessing religious education, civil registration services, government assistance, permits for houses of worship, and political representation. A survey conducted by the SETARA Institute found that 67% of indigenous belief adherents experience difficulties accessing public services because of their religious identity (SETARA Institute, 2023). In many cases, local bureaucratic officials impose additional requirements, including recommendation letters from leaders of officially recognized religions, thereby institutionalizing structural exclusion (Samhudi, 2022).

This paradox becomes more evident when examining community responses to structural marginalization. Although Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 formally recognizes indigenous beliefs within civil administration, its implementation continues to encounter bureaucratic resistance at the local level (Anwar & Baskoro, 2022; Samhudi, 2022). Nevertheless, the Parmalim community continues to maintain active participation in collective rituals such as *Marari Sabtu* and *Sipaha Lima*, despite ongoing stigmatization and social exclusion. This phenomenon raises important sociological

questions: how do indigenous communities sustain social cohesion, preserve collective identity, and develop institutional adaptation strategies amid persistent structural discrimination? Why does ritual participation remain strong when state institutions provide limited support for the preservation of indigenous identities while simultaneously encouraging assimilation into officially recognized religions? What mechanisms enable intergenerational cultural transmission when formal institutions systematically marginalize indigenous belief systems?

Understanding this phenomenon extends beyond academic interest alone. The ways marginalized communities maintain solidarity under structural pressure carry important implications for theories of social cohesion, religious resilience, indigenous agency, and state-society relations within pluralistic societies (Hasanuddin & Lakonawa, 2018; Iwamony, 2020). Practically, persistent discrimination against indigenous believers highlights the urgent need for evidence-based policies capable of narrowing the gap between constitutional recognition and administrative implementation (SETARA Institute, 2023). Moreover, because indigenous communities worldwide confront comparable pressures arising from state regulation, cultural homogenization, and religious domination (Coulthard & Alfred, 2014), the Parmalim case offers broader comparative insights into how indigenous groups balance cultural preservation with institutional adaptation in modern societies.

Existing scholarship on Parmalim and indigenous belief systems in Indonesia generally falls into three major research clusters. The first cluster examines ritual and theological dimensions. Gultom (2010) provides extensive documentation of *Ugamo Malim*, including cosmological frameworks, ceremonial practices, and spiritual teachings. Sembiring (2012) offers ethnographic descriptions of rituals such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Sada*, and *Mardebata* within the Parmalim community in Toba Samosir. Ahmad (2021) discusses Durkheimian concepts of ritual, totemism, and collective consciousness, although the analysis remains largely theoretical. Situmorang and Zuska (2023) explore how Parmalim adherents maintain indigenous traditions amid pressure from dominant religions. Although these studies contribute valuable ethnographic detail, they largely treat rituals as static expressions of belief rather than dynamic social processes. Consequently, they provide limited explanation regarding how rituals function as mechanisms of solidarity formation, cultural resilience, and social integration under conditions of marginalization.

The second cluster focuses on discrimination, legal recognition, and citizenship rights. Aritonang and Steenbrink (Steenbrink & S. Aritonang, 2008) explain the historical expansion of Christianity in Indonesia and its relationship with indigenous religious traditions. Anwar and Baskoro (Anwar & Baskoro, 2022) analyze legal protections following Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 and identify persistent implementation gaps. Samhudi (Samhudi, 2022) specifically examines bureaucratic difficulties surrounding the inclusion of indigenous beliefs within identity card administration. Quantitative evidence from the SETARA Institute (2023) further demonstrates that indigenous believers continue to encounter obstacles in accessing public services. Irmayani et al. (2017) investigate Parmalim participation in environmental preservation around Lake Toba, highlighting intersections between indigenous rights and ecological advocacy. Although these studies effectively document structural inequality, they often portray indigenous communities primarily as passive victims rather than as active agents capable of developing adaptive institutional strategies.

The third cluster examines religiosity, identity, resilience, and psychological well-being. Simarmata et al. (2023) demonstrate that religiosity significantly contributes to psychological well-being among Parmalim adherents, with 85.9% maintaining high religiosity and 68% reporting high psychological well-being. Their findings indicate that spiritual engagement contributes to psychological security, although the

study primarily emphasizes individual outcomes rather than collective solidarity mechanisms. Beyond the Indonesian context, Coulthard (Coulthard & Alfred, 2014) theorizes indigenous resistance to colonial recognition politics in Canada, while Webber and Macfarlane (2019) analyze the transformative role of Māori indigenous knowledge within educational contexts. Although these studies offer useful comparative perspectives, they do not specifically address the relationship between ritual practice, institutional adaptation, and solidarity formation within marginalized indigenous religious communities.

Synthesizing these three research clusters reveals four major gaps within existing scholarship. First, only a limited number of studies systematically apply classical sociological theory, particularly Durkheimian frameworks, to analyze indigenous community dynamics within non-Western contexts (Beckford, 2021b, 2021a; Hechter, 2020). When scholars employ Durkheimian concepts, they frequently reproduce Eurocentric developmental assumptions that inadequately capture postcolonial realities (Tole, 1993). Such approaches often treat mechanical solidarity as a traditional stage destined to disappear rather than as a continuing social resource. Second, existing studies tend to examine ritual traditions and institutional adaptation separately, overlooking the interaction between mechanical and organic solidarity within contemporary indigenous communities. Third, the literature rarely provides comparative theoretical explanations concerning how indigenous communities negotiate structural marginalization while preserving collective identity. Fourth, scholars have insufficiently theorized the political dimensions of ritual practices, particularly how rituals function not only as religious expressions but also as symbolic resistance against dominant religious and bureaucratic hegemonies. Consequently, the concept of “ritual resistance” remains underdeveloped within both Indonesian indigenous studies and broader sociological scholarship.

These gaps reflect deeper theoretical limitations within existing approaches. By separating traditional ritual practices from institutional adaptation, previous studies implicitly reproduce modernization assumptions that position traditional social organization as incompatible with modern institutional engagement. Similarly, studies that treat rituals merely as theological expressions overlook the ways marginalized communities strategically mobilize cultural practices to preserve identity, negotiate legitimacy, and resist domination. Research emphasizing discrimination without examining adaptive agency also risks reinforcing narratives of indigenous victimhood rather than explaining how communities actively sustain solidarity under structural constraint.

This study addresses these limitations by asking three central questions. First, how does the Parmalim community simultaneously maintain mechanical solidarity through ritual practices while developing organic solidarity through institutional engagement? Second, what adaptation strategies has the community developed in negotiating with state institutions, legal systems, and civil society organizations? Third, how do ritual practices function both as mechanisms of social integration and as forms of symbolic resistance against structural marginalization?

This study addresses these questions through three interconnected objectives grounded in Durkheimian sociology. First, the study examines how mechanical and organic solidarity operate simultaneously within the Parmalim community by analyzing the relationship between collective rituals, collective consciousness, and institutional adaptation. Through the concept of “hybrid solidarity,” this research argues that traditional and modern forms of solidarity coexist and mutually reinforce one another within contemporary indigenous contexts. Ritual participation strengthens communal identity and cultural continuity, while organizational networks and institutional engagement enable the community to negotiate with modern state structures.

Second, this study analyzes the institutional adaptation strategies developed by the Parmalim community in response to state regulation and modernization pressures. Building on previous studies concerning legal recognition (Anwar & Baskoro, 2022; Samhudi, 2022), this research moves beyond documenting discrimination by examining how the community develops organizational structures, collaborates with NGOs and advocacy networks such as *Majelis Luhur Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa Indonesia* (MLKI), and establishes community-based educational initiatives to preserve indigenous knowledge across generations. In addition, the study theorizes the political dimensions of ritual practices through the concept of “ritual resistance.” Drawing on Scott’s framework of “everyday resistance” (Dizayi, 2021), the study argues that rituals such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Lima*, *Mangan Na Paet*, and *Mardebata* function not only as expressions of spirituality but also as symbolic assertions of indigenous identity against dominant religious and bureaucratic structures.

This study advances two interconnected theoretical propositions. First, it proposes the concept of hybrid solidarity, namely the simultaneous operation of mechanical and organic solidarity within indigenous communities facing modernization pressures. Contrary to Durkheim’s assumption of a linear transition from mechanical to organic solidarity as societies modernize (Durkheim, 1995), the Parmalim community demonstrates that both forms can coexist and reinforce one another. Mechanical solidarity is reflected in collective rituals, shared beliefs, and ancestral value transmission that strengthen communal identity and emotional attachment, while organic solidarity emerges through organizational development, legal advocacy, and collaboration with civil society networks that enable the community to survive within modern state structures. Rather than representing sequential stages, both solidarities function as complementary strategies for cultural preservation and institutional adaptation. This argument also responds to calls for decolonizing classical sociological theory and expanding Durkheimian analysis within non-Western indigenous contexts (Beckford, 2021a; Gofman, 2019; Tole, 1993).

Second, this study introduces the concept of ritual resistance, referring to the political significance of traditional religious practices under conditions of structural marginalization. Drawing on Scott’s framework of “everyday resistance” (Dizayi, 2021), Parmalim rituals function not only as mechanisms of social integration but also as symbolic assertions of indigenous identity against state and majority religious dominance. Through collective worship, sacred gatherings, traditional dress, and ritual practices, the community creates “autonomous spaces” that reproduce collective identity beyond dominant institutional control (Coulthard & Alfred, 2014). These propositions suggest that Durkheimian theory requires extension when applied to postcolonial contexts marked by unequal power relations and state regulation of religion. They also demonstrate that indigenous agency operates simultaneously through institutional engagement and cultural practices, highlighting ritual as both a social and political resource for sustaining minority communities within pluralistic societies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines the Parmalim indigenous belief community in North Sumatra, Indonesia, as the primary unit of analysis. The research focuses on how the community maintains social solidarity and develops institutional adaptation under conditions of state marginalization toward indigenous belief systems. The analysis specifically covers collective ritual practices such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Lima*, *Sipaha Sada*, and *Mangan Na Paet*; institutional structures including *Ugamo Malim* and the *suhi ni ampang na opat* leadership council; and discursive representations related to indigenous belief recognition in state policies and media narratives. Individual adherents were also included as informants to explain broader

patterns of identity maintenance, ritual participation, and adaptation strategies within the Parmalim community.

This study employs a qualitative research design using an embedded case study approach (Yin, 2018). The qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to understand the simultaneous operation of mechanical and organic solidarity, the meanings attached to ritual practices, and the institutional strategies developed by the Parmalim community in response to state regulation. Such issues require interpretive and contextual analysis that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To strengthen analytical depth, the study combines ethnographic methods and critical discourse analysis. Ethnography enables direct observation of ritual practices, social interaction, and everyday community life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), while critical discourse analysis is used to examine how power relations are reflected in policy documents, media representations, and community narratives (Fairclough, 2020).

The study uses both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained from thirty-five Parmalim adherents selected through purposive sampling based on formal positions within Parmalim organizational structures (*ihutan*, *ulu pungan*, and members of the *suhi ni ampang na opat* council), length of experience as adherents, age cohort, gender, and geographical location in Toba and Samosir Regencies. Additional information was collected from focus group discussions involving youth members, women adherents, and community leaders. Secondary data were derived from Constitutional Court Ruling No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, government regulations, organizational records, NGO reports, media publications, and previous studies related to indigenous belief communities and religious marginalization.

Data collection was conducted over twelve months (January - December 2023) through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and a complementary survey. Observations were carried out in important Parmalim ritual and community sites, including Hutatinggi Village, *Bale Pasogit Partonggoan*, *Pusuk Buhit*, and *Aek Sipitu Dai*. Semi-structured interviews explored ritual experiences, institutional adaptation, discrimination, and identity negotiation within the community. Focus group discussions were conducted to examine generational change, women's participation, and community strategies for cultural preservation. Documentary materials were systematically collected from legal databases, organizational archives, media sources, and advocacy institutions. Survey instruments were used descriptively to support qualitative findings related to ritual participation, identity pride, and experiences of state marginalization.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2006) framework, including data familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, and interpretation. The analysis focused on identifying forms of mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity, ritual resistance, and institutional adaptation within Parmalim community life. In addition, critical discourse analysis following Fairclough (Fairclough, 2020) was used to examine the relationship between state discourse, media representation, and indigenous identity construction. Findings from interviews, observations, documents, and survey data were integrated through triangulation and contextual interpretation to strengthen analytical validity. Research rigor was ensured through prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and systematic documentation of the research process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Ritual-Based Mechanical Solidarity and Collective Cohesion**

This study was conducted in the Parmalim indigenous belief community located in Toba Regency and Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. The Parmalim are adherents of *Ugamo Malim*, an indigenous Batak Toba belief system that has survived across generations despite pressures from religious marginalization, modernization, and state regulation. Field observations reveal that the Parmalim community continues to maintain strong communal attachment through collective rituals, shared moral teachings, and customary obligations rooted in Batak spiritual traditions. The social life of the community is guided by several core teachings, namely *Tona* (teachings), *Poda* (commandments), *Patik* (canon), and *Uhum* (law), which function as moral guidelines regulating religious conduct, social interaction, and communal responsibility among adherents. Interviews with community leaders and members indicate that these teachings are transmitted continuously through ritual gatherings, family education, and communal religious activities.

The findings show that ritual practices occupy a central position within Parmalim religious and social life. The community practices both scheduled and unscheduled ceremonies that structure communal interaction throughout the year. Scheduled rituals include *Marari Sabtu* (weekly Sabbath observance), *Mangan Na Paet* (Bitter Meal ceremony), *Sipaha Sada* (First Moon festival), and *Sipaha Lima* (Fifth Moon festival). Unscheduled rituals include *Martutuaek* (purification and naming rites for newborns), *Mamasumasu* (marriage blessing ceremonies), *Pasahat Tondi* (spirit release ceremonies for the deceased), *Manganggir* (purification rites), and *Mardebata* (ritual worship and repentance ceremonies). These ceremonies are commonly conducted collectively at sacred locations such as *Bale Pasogit Partonggoan* in Hutatinggi, *Pusuk Buhit*, and *Aek Sipitu Dai*, which are considered spiritually significant within the Parmalim cosmological tradition. The classification of Parmalim ritual practices into scheduled and unscheduled ceremonies is summarized in Figure 1. Focus group discussion findings during fieldwork demonstrate that ritual participation remains highly active, particularly during annual ceremonies attended by Parmalim adherents from various districts across North Sumatra (FGD, September 18, 2023).

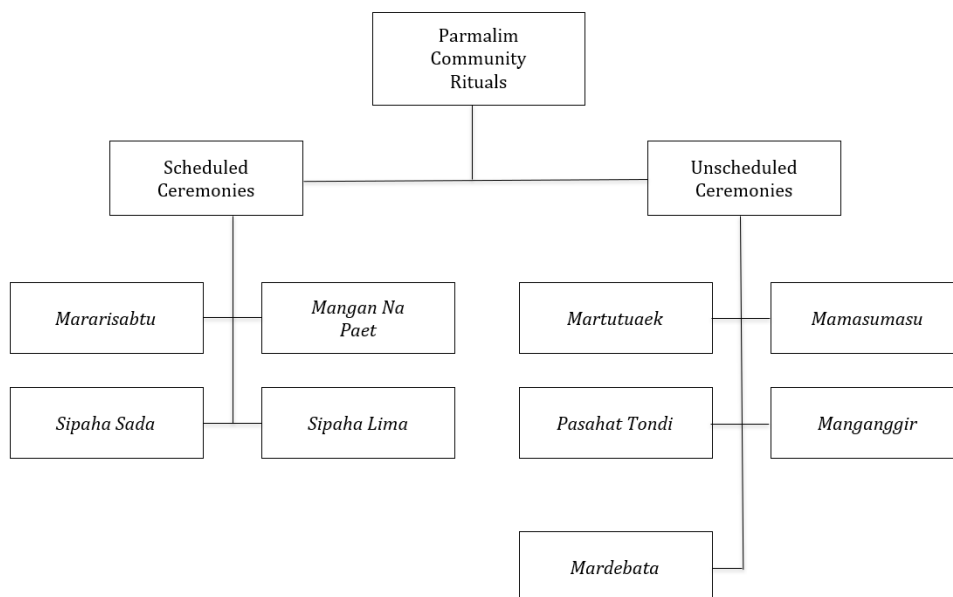


Figure 1. Ritual Practices of the Parmalim Community

As shown in Figure 1, Parmalim ritual life is organized through two major categories: scheduled ceremonies and unscheduled ceremonies. Scheduled ceremonies regulate collective worship and annual communal gatherings, while unscheduled ceremonies are closely related to life-cycle events, purification, repentance, and the restoration of spiritual balance. This classification demonstrates that ritual practices are not incidental activities, but institutionalized mechanisms that structure religious participation, social interaction, and collective identity within the Parmalim community.

Field observations indicate that *Marari Sabtu* constitutes one of the important collective rituals within the Parmalim community. Conducted every Saturday, the ceremony functions as a weekly worship gathering involving collective prayer, spiritual reflection, ritual recitation, and communal interaction. Community members explained that the ritual is rooted in sacred teachings inherited from *Raja Ihat Manisia* and later institutionalized during the leadership of *Raja Nasiakbagi* as an obligatory observance for Parmalim adherents. During the ritual process, participants gather in a collective setting under the guidance of ritual authorities and take part in *tonggo-tonggo*, or a sequence of prayers, accompanied by *pelean*, or ritual offerings. The practice of *tonggo-tonggo* with *pelean* illustrates how prayer, offering, and collective participation are integrated within Parmalim ritual life, as shown in Figure 2. The ceremony also functions as an opportunity for reinforcing communal relationships and transmitting religious teachings to younger generations. Interviews with several youth participants indicate that participation in *Marari Sabtu* creates a sense of collective belonging and strengthens attachment to Parmalim identity despite experiences of social exclusion in broader society.



**Figure 2. Parmalim Adherents Performing *Tonggo-tonggo* with *Pelean***  
Source: Author's documentation.

As shown in Figure 2, Parmalim adherents gather in a seated ritual formation while participating in *tonggo-tonggo*, a sequence of prayers performed together as part of communal worship. The presence of *pelean*, or ritual offerings, indicates that prayer in Parmalim tradition is not only verbal but also embodied through symbolic materials arranged within the ritual space. This visual documentation strengthens the field observation that Parmalim ritual practice is a collective medium for expressing devotion, maintaining moral discipline, and reproducing social solidarity. In this sense, *Marari Sabtu* is not merely a weekly act of worship, but also a social space where shared symbols, ritual authority, and communal belonging are continuously reinforced.

Another important annual ritual identified during the study is *Mangan Na Paet*, which literally means “eating the bitter.” This ceremony is conducted as a collective act of repentance and spiritual purification before entering a new year. Participants are required to consume bitter substances and undertake a fasting period as symbolic expressions of moral reflection and atonement for human wrongdoing. Interviews with Parmalim elders indicate that the ritual represents the acknowledgment of human imperfection and the need for spiritual cleansing before beginning a new cycle of life. During the ceremony, communal prayers are conducted collectively, and participants gather with extended family members and community networks. Observations reveal that *Mangan Na Paet* also functions as a moment of collective solidarity because the ritual encourages reflection not only on individual conduct but also on communal harmony and moral responsibility within the community.

The study also documented the implementation of *Sipaha Sada* and *Sipaha Lima*, two of the largest annual ceremonies within the Parmalim religious tradition. *Sipaha Sada* commemorates the birth of *Simarimbulubosi* and is conducted annually during the first month of the Batak calendar. Ritual activities are centered at *Bale Pasogit Partonggoan* and are accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as *gondang hasapi* and *hasapi*. Observations indicate that the ceremony involves collective worship, ceremonial offerings, communal meals, and ritual performances attended by Parmalim adherents from different regions. Community leaders explained that the ritual serves both religious and cultural purposes because it preserves ancestral teachings while strengthening social interaction among Parmalim families.

Meanwhile, *Sipaha Lima* represents the largest and most elaborate annual ceremony within the Parmalim community. Conducted over three consecutive days during the fifth month of the Batak calendar, the ritual involves large-scale communal gatherings, ritual offerings or *pelean*, collective prayers, and ceremonial performances accompanied by *gondang sabangunan* music. Participant observation during *Sipaha Lima* demonstrates that the ceremony attracts Parmalim adherents from multiple districts and functions as an important space for strengthening kinship ties, communal identity, and interregional social networks. The collective scale, ceremonial arrangement, sacred space, traditional clothing, ritual offerings, and communal participation in *Sipaha Lima* are illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Implementation of the *Sipaha Lima* Ritual by *Ugamo Malim***  
Source: Author's documentation.

As shown in Figure 3, *Sipaha Lima* is performed in a highly communal ritual setting involving a large number of Parmalim adherents gathered around a sacred ceremonial space. The presence of ritual offerings, ceremonial decorations, traditional Batak garments, and collective participation indicates that *Sipaha Lima* is not merely an annual religious observance, but also a public expression of Parmalim identity and cultural continuity. The visual documentation strengthens the field observation that *Sipaha Lima* functions as a central arena for reaffirming collective belonging, preserving ancestral teachings, and sustaining intergenerational solidarity within the Parmalim community.

Interviews with participants indicate that attending *Sipaha Lima* is considered both a religious obligation and an expression of collective loyalty to the Parmalim tradition. Several participants also explained that the ceremony serves as an important moment for transmitting cultural values and ritual knowledge to younger generations. In this sense, *Sipaha Lima* plays a dual role: it functions as a sacred ritual of devotion to *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon* and as a social mechanism through which the Parmalim community maintains cohesion, cultural memory, and collective resilience amid broader social and administrative pressures.

In addition to collective annual rituals, the study identified several life-cycle ceremonies that remain actively practiced within the Parmalim community. *Martutuaek* functions as a purification and naming ritual for newborn children and is commonly accompanied by communal thanksgiving gatherings attended by relatives and neighbors. *Mamasumasu* serves as a sacred marriage blessing ceremony officiated by an *Ihutan* or *Ulu Punguan*, while *Pasahat Tondi* is conducted following death to symbolically deliver the spirit of the deceased to *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon*. Other rituals such as *Manganggir* and *Mardebata* are associated with purification, repentance, and the restoration of ritual balance following moral or spiritual transgressions. Interviews with Parmalim adherents reveal that these ceremonies continue to play important roles in regulating social relations, maintaining communal obligations, and reinforcing spiritual continuity within the community.

Field observations demonstrate that ritual participation remains highly active within the Parmalim community despite experiences of discrimination, social stigma, and administrative marginalization. Ritual spaces function not only as sites of worship but also as important arenas for communal interaction, cultural preservation, and organizational coordination. Community members explained that collective rituals strengthen emotional attachment to Parmalim identity and create a sense of solidarity amid external pressures from dominant religious and bureaucratic structures. Younger participants further emphasized that communal ceremonies provide opportunities to learn Batak traditions, sacred teachings, and indigenous cultural practices that are rarely transmitted through formal educational institutions.

“When we gather in rituals like *Marari Sabtu* or *Sipaha Lima*, we feel connected again as Parmalim people. The rituals remind us who we are and teach younger generations about our traditions, even though many outside the community still do not understand us” (R, Parmalim Youth Participant, Interview, 21 August 2023).

These findings indicate that ritual practices constitute the primary basis of mechanical solidarity within the Parmalim community. Shared beliefs, collective worship, ritual discipline, sacred spaces, symbolic offerings, and intergenerational transmission create a strong collective consciousness among adherents. Through repeated participation in *Marari Sabtu*, *Mangan Na Paet*, *Sipaha Sada*, *Sipaha Lima*, and various life-cycle ceremonies, Parmalim members reproduce a sense of moral unity, emotional attachment, and communal belonging. Therefore, ritual practices do not merely preserve religious tradition; they function as social mechanisms through which the community maintains cohesion, regulates

social relations, and strengthens collective identity amid external pressures of stigma, discrimination, and administrative marginalization.

### **Institutional Adaptation and Organic Solidarity**

While ritual practices provide the foundation of mechanical solidarity within the Parmalim community, field findings show that the community also develops institutional adaptation as a strategy for negotiating with state bureaucracy, legal systems, and civil society networks. This adaptation emerges from the need to respond to administrative marginalization, unequal recognition, and social pressures faced by indigenous belief adherents in Indonesia. Rather than relying solely on ritual cohesion, the Parmalim community strengthens formal leadership structures, organizational coordination, educational initiatives, and advocacy networks to sustain its collective existence. These institutional developments indicate that Parmalim solidarity is not only rooted in shared beliefs and collective rituals, but also in differentiated roles, organizational functions, and external relations that reflect the formation of organic solidarity.

Field findings indicate that the institutional adaptation of the Parmalim community is closely related to continuing administrative pressures experienced by adherents in everyday life. Community members reported obstacles in accessing civil registration services, particularly in matters related to identity cards, the official registration of *Kepercayaan* status, birth certificates, and other population documents. Similar difficulties also appear in access to religious education for Parmalim children, government assistance programs, permits for places of worship, and broader administrative recognition within local bureaucratic systems. Although Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 has provided a legal basis for the recognition of indigenous belief adherents in civil administration, field interviews show that implementation at the local level remains uneven and often depends on the understanding and discretion of bureaucratic officials. One Parmalim adherent explained:

“Even after the Constitutional Court decision, many of us still face difficulties when dealing with local officials. Sometimes they still ask us to choose one of the recognized religions if we want administrative documents processed quickly” (S, Parmalim Community Member, Interview, 16 September 2023).

These administrative obstacles show that the Parmalim community cannot rely solely on cultural preservation or ritual continuity to maintain its collective existence. The persistence of bureaucratic barriers has encouraged the community to develop more organized institutional responses, including strengthening internal leadership structures, building advocacy networks, and establishing communication strategies with state institutions. Community leaders explained that formal organization became necessary not only to coordinate ritual and educational activities, but also to represent Parmalim adherents in administrative negotiations concerning citizenship rights, civil registration, and public recognition. In this context, institutional adaptation emerges as a practical response to structural marginalization, enabling the community to transform experiences of exclusion into collective strategies for legal recognition, social visibility, and cultural continuity.

The internal organization of *Ugamo Malim* shows how institutional adaptation is developed through differentiated roles and leadership functions. The highest authority is held by the *ihutan*, who is responsible for major religious, organizational, and customary decisions. At the local level, branch communities are coordinated by *ulu pungan*, who organize ritual activities, maintain communication among adherents, and mediate relations between the central leadership and local members. The

organizational structure also includes *suhi ni ampang na opat*, a council of four officials consisting of the *pargomgom* or *ulu pungan* as spiritual leader, *pangumei* as chairperson, *partahi* as secretary, and *namora* as treasurer. This division of roles demonstrates that Parmalim institutional life is not only maintained through shared belief, but also through functional differentiation, administrative coordination, and collective responsibility. In this respect, the internal structure of *Ugamo Malim* reflects the emergence of organic solidarity because the community depends on interrelated roles to coordinate rituals, preserve teachings, manage organizational affairs, and engage with external institutions.

The diversity of Parmalim factions, their historical foundations, central locations, and organizational structures is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Structural Characteristics and Foundational Data of Parmalim Factions and Associated Batak Spiritual Communities**

No.	Organization/Community	Year Founded	Main Figure/Founder	Central Location	Organizational Structure/Institutional Feature
1	Parmalim Hutatinggi ( <i>Ugamo Malim</i> )	1870	Raja Nasiakbagi → Raja Mulia Naipospos	Hutatinggi, Laguboti, Toba Regency	Central <i>ihutan</i> leadership, branch-level <i>ulu pungan</i> , and approximately 42 branches
2	Golongan Si Raja Batak	17 June 1942	Raja Pangihutan Sitompul → Raja Darius Sibarani → Amir Sampoara Marpaung	Tarutung → Laguboti, Simpang Kola	King-based leadership; no formal regeneration system
3	Golongan Si Raja Batak Parbaringin Malim Marsada	1997, as name transformation	Amir Sampoara Marpaung	Laguboti	King-based leadership
4	PAMBI/PABBI, Persatuan Agama Malim Batak Indonesia/Persatuan Agama Malim Baringin Batak Indonesia	1955	Data not available	Data not available	Participated in the 1955 Election
5	Parmalim Marsada	Around the 1980s	Transformation of the Si Raja Batak group	Data not available	Affiliated with the institution of King Sisingamangaraja XII
6	Perhimpunan Parbaringin Sisingamangaraja	Data not available	Tiodore Galimbat Bakara	Sipolha, Pematang Sidamanik, Simalungun Regency	<i>Ihutan</i> or elders, secretary, treasurer, <i>parbarita</i> , <i>sibaso</i> , and <i>pande</i>
7	<i>Ugamo Bangso Batak</i>	2001 officially; early rituals since the 1990s	Data not available	Spiritually centered in the Pusuk Buhit area	<i>Partogi</i> leadership and routine worship system, including daily, weekly, and annual worship
8	<i>Ugamo Parmalim Huta Halasan, Sionggang</i>	2017	Raja Poltak Marsinton Naipospos	Huta Halasan, Sionggang Village,	King Habonoron for religious affairs, King Adat for customary relations, and King

No.	Organization/Community	Year Founded	Main Figure/Founder	Central Location	Organizational Structure/Institutional Feature
				Lumbanjulu District, Toba Regency	Namora for economic affairs
9	Local non-centralized Parmalim communities	Data not available	Data not available	Pintupohan Meranti, Tanah Datar Asahan, Jangga, Onanganjang, and Panamparan	Not centrally organized; local community-based coordination

Source: Field data and document compilation, 2023.

As shown in Table 1, Parmalim institutional development is not represented by a single homogeneous organization. Instead, it consists of several factions and associated Batak spiritual communities with different historical origins, leadership models, territorial bases, and degrees of organizational formalization. *Ugamo Malim* in Hutatinggi appears as the most institutionally consolidated organization because it has a central *ihutan* leadership, branch-level *ulu pungan*, and an extensive network of local branches. Other groups, such as *Golongan Si Raja Batak*, *Parmalim Marsada*, *Ugamo Bangso Batak*, and *Ugamo Parmalim Huta Halasan*, demonstrate different patterns of authority, ranging from king-based leadership to locally organized ritual systems. Meanwhile, several local Parmalim communities remain non-centralized, indicating that institutional adaptation among Parmalim adherents develops through both formal organizations and flexible community-based arrangements. This variation shows that organic solidarity within the Parmalim community emerges through differentiated roles, institutional plurality, and functional coordination across diverse organizational settings.

The findings further show that Parmalim institutional adaptation extends beyond internal organizational consolidation through the development of external networks with indigenous belief organizations, civil society groups, academic institutions, media actors, state agencies, and interfaith communities. Participation in the *Majelis Luhur Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa Indonesia* (MLKI) provides Parmalim representatives with a broader platform to articulate issues related to indigenous belief recognition, civil administration, and equal citizenship rights. Collaboration with organizations such as *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN), non-governmental organizations, academics, and media institutions also strengthens the community's capacity to document discrimination, communicate its cultural identity, and advocate for administrative recognition. In addition, field observations indicate that Parmalim adherents increasingly participate in interfaith dialogue and local social activities involving Christian, Muslim, and other religious communities. These networks demonstrate that Parmalim adaptation is not confined to internal survival, but expands into broader social relations that enable the community to negotiate legitimacy, build public visibility, and pursue recognition within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

"We realized that if we only remain silent, our traditions could disappear. That is why we built community organizations, taught our children about *Ugamo Malim*, and worked together with other indigenous belief groups" (M, Member of *suhi ni ampang na opat*, Interview, 12 October 2023).

Community-based education also becomes an important strategy of institutional adaptation within the Parmalim community. Field findings indicate that Parmalim leaders and families actively create informal learning spaces to transmit the history of Parmalim, Batak Toba cultural values, the teachings of *Ugamo Malim*, and ritual knowledge to younger generations. These educational activities are carried out through family instruction, ritual participation, community gatherings, and guidance from religious leaders. Community members explained that such initiatives are necessary because indigenous belief systems are still rarely represented adequately within formal educational institutions. Through community-based education, younger Parmalim adherents learn not only religious doctrines and ritual procedures, but also moral values, collective memory, and cultural responsibilities. In this context, education functions as an adaptive mechanism that strengthens intergenerational continuity while enabling the community to preserve its identity within a social environment shaped by dominant religious and bureaucratic categories.

These findings indicate that institutional adaptation constitutes an important basis of organic solidarity within the Parmalim community. Unlike ritual-based solidarity, which is grounded in shared beliefs, collective consciousness, and communal ritual participation, organic solidarity emerges through differentiated roles, organizational structures, legal advocacy, educational initiatives, and collaborative networks with external actors. The development of *Ugamo Malim* institutions, leadership structures such as *ihutan*, *ulu pungan*, and *suhi ni ampang na opat*, as well as cooperation with civil society organizations, state agencies, academic institutions, media actors, and interfaith networks, demonstrates that the Parmalim community has created institutional mechanisms to negotiate citizenship rights and preserve cultural identity. In this sense, organic solidarity does not replace ritual-based mechanical solidarity, but complements it by enabling the community to engage with modern bureaucratic, legal, and social systems while maintaining its indigenous religious foundation.

### **Ritual Resistance and Symbolic Contestation**

Beyond their role in maintaining internal cohesion, Parmalim rituals also function as symbolic practices through which the community affirms its indigenous religious identity under conditions of social stigma and administrative marginalization. Field findings show that ritual practices are not performed merely as acts of worship or as mechanisms for strengthening communal solidarity, but also as public expressions of cultural presence and collective dignity. Through repeated participation in ritual gatherings, prayer recitations, offerings, sacred symbols, and traditional ceremonial forms, Parmalim adherents demonstrate that their belief system remains socially alive despite being positioned unequally within dominant religious and bureaucratic structures. In this sense, ritual becomes a medium through which the community preserves devotion, maintains solidarity, and asserts its continued existence within Indonesia's plural yet contested religious landscape.

Field interviews indicate that Parmalim adherents continue to experience symbolic pressure in everyday social relations. Several community members explained that Parmalim rituals are often misunderstood by outsiders and are sometimes associated with negative stereotypes because they do not conform to dominant religious categories. This misunderstanding appears not only in social interaction, but also in administrative encounters where adherents are sometimes encouraged to identify with one of the state-recognized religions for practical purposes. One community member stated,

“Even after the Constitutional Court decision, many of us still face difficulties when dealing with local officials. Sometimes they still ask us to choose one of the recognized religions if we want

administrative documents processed quickly” (S, Parmalim Community Member, Interview, 16 September 2023).

A youth participant also emphasized that “*many outside the community still do not understand us*” (R, Parmalim Youth Participant, Interview, 21 August 2023). These accounts show that Parmalim adherents face not only administrative obstacles, but also symbolic marginalization in which their rituals and identity are frequently misunderstood, questioned, or placed outside dominant religious norms.

Field observations further show that ritual symbols play an important role in making Parmalim identity visible and recognizable. During ritual gatherings, adherents wear white garments, use *ulos*, perform prayers through *tonggo-tonggo*, prepare *pelean*, and conduct ceremonies in sacred spaces associated with Parmalim cosmology. Author documentation of ritual practice also shows adherents gathered in a seated formation while performing *tonggo-tonggo* accompanied by *pelean*. These symbols are not merely ceremonial accessories; they express purity, discipline, devotion, cultural belonging, and attachment to Batak Toba ancestral values. White garments mark moral seriousness and ritual order, *ulos* connects the ritual with Batak cultural identity, *gondang* expresses both spiritual and cultural meaning, *pelean* represents ritual offering, and *tonggo-tonggo* embodies collective prayer. These ritual symbols make Parmalim identity visible and recognizable, allowing adherents to affirm their belief publicly without direct confrontation.

Public rituals such as *Marari Sabtu* and *Sipaha Lima* demonstrate how ritual continuity becomes a form of identity preservation under social and administrative pressure. Field observations show that *Marari Sabtu* is performed regularly as a weekly worship practice, while *Sipaha Lima* is conducted as a large-scale annual ceremony attended by Parmalim adherents from different regions. Author documentation of *Sipaha Lima* shows a communal ritual setting in which adherents gather around a sacred ceremonial space, accompanied by ritual offerings, traditional clothing, and collective participation. Interviews with participants indicate that attending *Sipaha Lima* is understood not only as a religious obligation, but also as an expression of loyalty to Parmalim tradition. The persistence of these rituals shows that the community does not erase or conceal its identity in order to adjust to dominant religious expectations. Instead, ritual gatherings become safe communal spaces where Parmalim adherents reaffirm their collective existence and transmit ritual knowledge to younger generations.

Field findings also indicate that public representation has become an important strategy for responding to negative stereotypes. Community members explained that ritual documentation, participation in cultural activities, and the use of digital media by younger adherents help introduce Parmalim traditions to wider society. These forms of representation are not limited to cultural display; they also function as efforts to correct public misunderstanding about Parmalim rituals and indigenous belief practices. Younger participants play an important role in translating ritual meanings, historical narratives, and cultural symbols into forms that can be more easily understood by broader audiences. One youth participant explained,

“When we document our rituals or share information about Parmalim, we want people to understand that this is not something strange or deviant. It is our ancestral teaching and part of Batak identity that we must preserve” (Y, Parmalim Youth Participant, Interview, 7 November 2023).

Through documentation, public cultural events, and digital representation, Parmalim adherents seek to show that their ritual traditions are part of Batak Toba indigenous religious heritage rather than deviant or marginal practices.

These findings indicate that ritual resistance among the Parmalim community operates through quiet, symbolic, and culturally embedded practices rather than direct political confrontation. Field data show that resistance is expressed through the continuity of ritual practice, the visible use of sacred symbols, the wearing of ritual clothing, collective prayer, ritual offerings, traditional music, and public representation of Parmalim identity. These practices function as symbolic contestation against stigma, bureaucratic exclusion, and dominant religious narratives that have often marginalized indigenous belief systems. Ritual resistance therefore becomes a way for Parmalim adherents to claim dignity, preserve cultural memory, and affirm their right to exist within Indonesia's plural religious landscape. Through this process, ritual is transformed from a purely religious practice into a social and symbolic resource for sustaining identity, recognition, and collective survival.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study demonstrates that the Parmalim community maintains social cohesion and institutional continuity through the simultaneous operation of ritual solidarity, collective identity preservation, and organizational adaptation amid structural marginalization. The findings reveal that ritual participation remains exceptionally strong despite experiences of administrative discrimination, social exclusion, and unequal religious recognition. Collective ceremonies such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Lima*, *Sipaha Sada*, and *Mangan Na Paet* continue to function as central spaces for transmitting ancestral teachings, reinforcing communal attachment, and preserving indigenous identity across generations. At the same time, the community has developed organizational networks, legal advocacy strategies, educational initiatives, and inter-institutional collaborations to negotiate with modern state structures. These findings indicate that Parmalim solidarity cannot be understood solely as a residual traditional structure but rather as an adaptive and dynamic social system operating within conditions of political and cultural pressure.

The findings further reveal that the coexistence of ritual preservation and institutional adaptation challenges the linear assumptions embedded within classical Durkheimian theory. Durkheim (Durkheim, 1995) conceptualized mechanical solidarity as characteristic of relatively homogeneous traditional societies bound by collective consciousness, while organic solidarity emerged through specialization, institutional differentiation, and functional interdependence in modern societies. However, the Parmalim case demonstrates that these solidarities do not operate sequentially. Instead, they coexist simultaneously and reinforce one another within a postcolonial indigenous context. Rituals rooted in mechanical solidarity remain central for sustaining collective consciousness, while organizational development, legal advocacy, and institutional networking reflect forms of organic solidarity necessary for survival within bureaucratic modernity. This finding suggests that Durkheim's evolutionary tendency toward a linear transition from mechanical to organic solidarity requires significant reconsideration when applied to marginalized indigenous communities confronting modern state power.

Historically, this phenomenon cannot be separated from the long trajectory of religious governance in Indonesia. Since the colonial period and especially during the New Order regime, the Indonesian state institutionalized a hierarchy of officially recognized religions that positioned indigenous belief systems outside formal structures of legitimacy (Steenbrink & Aritonang, 2008). Although Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 formally recognized indigenous belief adherents within civil administration, the findings reveal that bureaucratic discrimination persists at local levels through administrative obstacles, social stigma, and unequal access to public services. This historical context explains why Parmalim rituals today function not merely as inherited spiritual practices but also as mechanisms for cultural survival under conditions of state regulation. The persistence of ritual

participation among 92% of community members despite structural discrimination illustrates that collective rituals have become historically embedded forms of resilience against assimilation pressures.

Socially, the findings reveal that rituals continue to function as mechanisms for maintaining collective attachment and intergenerational continuity. Existing studies by Gultom (Gultom, 2010), Sembiring (Sembiring, 2012), and Situmorang and Zuska (Situmorang & Zuska, 2023) primarily document Parmalim rituals as theological and cultural traditions. While these studies provide important ethnographic descriptions of ceremonies such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Sada*, and *Mardebata*, they tend to treat rituals as relatively static expressions of belief. The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that ritual practices also operate as dynamic mechanisms of social integration under conditions of marginalization. Ritual participation creates emotional solidarity, reinforces collective memory, and establishes symbolic boundaries separating the community from dominant external structures. This finding supports Durkheim's argument that rituals reproduce collective consciousness, yet simultaneously expands it by showing that rituals become increasingly significant when communities experience structural exclusion. In the Parmalim context, rituals are not only religious obligations but also social infrastructures preserving communal cohesion amidst external pressures.

The findings also challenge the tendency within previous scholarship to portray indigenous communities primarily as passive victims of discrimination. Studies focusing on legal recognition and civil rights, such as Anwar and Baskoro (Anwar & Baskoro, 2022) and Samhudi (Samhudi, 2022), effectively document persistent inequalities in public administration and citizenship rights. However, these studies pay less attention to the active strategies developed by indigenous communities to negotiate such conditions. The Parmalim case demonstrates substantial institutional agency through the establishment of *Ugamo Malim* organizational networks, the development of community-based educational initiatives, collaboration with advocacy organizations, and participation in broader indigenous belief alliances such as *Majelis Luhur Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa Indonesia* (MLKI). These findings reveal that the community is not merely adapting defensively but actively constructing institutional mechanisms for cultural preservation and political negotiation. Consequently, organic solidarity in this context does not primarily emerge through economic specialization, as Durkheim initially theorized, but through collective institutional adaptation aimed at protecting cultural continuity and securing legal recognition.

Ideologically, the findings reveal how ritual practices become forms of symbolic resistance against dominant religious and bureaucratic hegemonies. Durkheim largely interpreted rituals as integrative mechanisms reinforcing moral solidarity and social order. However, the Parmalim case demonstrates that rituals in marginalized indigenous contexts simultaneously carry political meanings. Collective worship at *Pusuk Buhit*, the use of white ritual garments, *ulos* textiles, *gondang* musical performances, and communal prayers function as symbolic affirmations of indigenous identity against state-imposed religious hierarchies. This extends previous theoretical discussions by Ahmad (Ahmad, 2021), whose analysis of Durkheimian ritual concepts remained primarily abstract and theoretical. The present findings empirically demonstrate that rituals are not merely symbolic reproductions of sacred values but also forms of cultural assertion resisting ideological domination. In this sense, the concept of "ritual resistance" developed in this study expands Durkheimian sociology by integrating questions of power, state regulation, and symbolic contestation largely absent from Durkheim's original framework.

This reinterpretation also responds to broader critiques concerning the Eurocentrism of classical sociological theory. Beckford (Beckford, 2021a) and Tole (Tole, 1993) argue that Durkheimian categories often assume developmental trajectories shaped by European experiences of industrialization, secularization, and nation-state formation. The Parmalim case demonstrates that such assumptions

become insufficient in postcolonial societies where the state actively constructs religious hierarchies and differentiates between legitimate and illegitimate belief systems. Mechanical solidarity within indigenous communities cannot simply be understood as a pre-modern residue awaiting replacement by organic solidarity. Instead, it remains an actively mobilized cultural resource enabling communities to survive within unequal political structures. Therefore, this study does not reject Durkheimian theory entirely but rather proposes its contextual revision. Durkheim's insights concerning collective consciousness and ritual solidarity remain analytically valuable, yet they must be supplemented by attention to postcolonial power relations, state governance, and symbolic domination.

The findings further reveal that institutional adaptation among the Parmalim community reflects what this study conceptualizes as "hybrid solidarity." Existing literature tends to examine either ritual preservation or institutional modernization separately. The present study demonstrates that these dimensions are deeply interconnected. Mechanical solidarity generated through rituals provides emotional commitment, moral legitimacy, and collective identity, while organic solidarity generated through organizational networks, advocacy, and educational initiatives enables engagement with modern institutional systems. Rather than representing contradictory forms of social organization, these solidarities function dialectically and mutually reinforce one another. This explains why Parmalim communities are able simultaneously to preserve ritual traditions and develop sophisticated institutional strategies for citizenship negotiation. The concept of hybrid solidarity therefore offers a theoretical contribution to indigenous studies and sociology of religion by explaining how marginalized communities combine cultural continuity with institutional flexibility.

The Parmalim case also contributes to broader comparative discussions concerning indigenous resistance movements. Similar patterns of cultural preservation and institutional adaptation have been observed among Māori communities in New Zealand and indigenous movements in Canada (Coulthard & Alfred, 2014; Webber & Macfarlane, 2019). However, the Indonesian context presents distinctive characteristics shaped by state religious bureaucracy, the legacy of centralized religious governance, and continuing tensions between constitutional pluralism and administrative practice (Arfa, 2014; Jonathan et al., 2018; Salim, 2010). Unlike indigenous struggles centered primarily on territorial autonomy, the Parmalim case demonstrates that religious recognition itself becomes the primary arena of contestation. Consequently, solidarity within the community develops not only through kinship and cultural memory but also through legal advocacy and bureaucratic negotiation (Hasanuddin & Lakonawa, 2018; Iwamony, 2020). This finding broadens comparative understandings of indigenous resistance by emphasizing how religious marginalization shapes unique forms of collective adaptation in Southeast Asian contexts.

From a functional perspective, the findings reveal several important contributions of Parmalim solidarity mechanisms. Rituals strengthen emotional attachment, preserve indigenous cultural heritage, reinforce intergenerational continuity, and create social cohesion within marginalized communities. Organizational adaptation enables greater access to civil rights, public visibility, and institutional representation. Community-based education initiatives help preserve Batak Toba language, values, and cosmological knowledge among younger generations. Interfaith collaboration and advocacy networks also contribute to broader democratic recognition of religious diversity within Indonesian society. These functions demonstrate that indigenous solidarity systems continue to play important roles not only for community survival but also for maintaining cultural plurality within pluralistic societies.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies several disfunctions emerging from these processes. The increasing institutionalization of Parmalim identity risks transforming sacred traditions into bureaucratic categories shaped by state expectations. Participation in tourism and cultural festivals may contribute to

the commodification of sacred rituals, potentially reducing spiritual practices into cultural performances for external audiences. Generational adaptation toward digital platforms also creates tensions between cultural preservation and ritual authenticity. Younger community members increasingly reinterpret traditions through social media and digital representation, while older generations often express concerns regarding the erosion of sacred values (Kurniawan & Harahap, 2025). Furthermore, the necessity of negotiating continuously with dominant administrative structures may reinforce feelings of alienation and psychological burden among community members (Sumut Pos, 2017). These disfunctions reveal that institutional adaptation, while necessary for survival, simultaneously generates new vulnerabilities and internal tensions within indigenous communities.

The findings therefore carry important policy implications. First, the Indonesian government must strengthen the implementation of Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016 through clearer administrative regulations, anti-discrimination monitoring, and institutional oversight at local bureaucratic levels. Second, multicultural and indigenous belief education should be integrated more systematically into national educational curricula to reduce stigma and increase public understanding regarding indigenous religions. Third, cultural preservation initiatives should prioritize community-based participation rather than merely promoting indigenous traditions as tourism commodities. Fourth, support for indigenous educational institutions and digital cultural archiving programs is necessary to facilitate intergenerational transmission without undermining ritual authenticity. Finally, collaboration between state institutions, universities, NGOs, and indigenous organizations should be expanded to ensure that recognition of indigenous belief systems moves beyond symbolic legality toward substantive social equality.

This study demonstrates that the Parmalim community does not merely survive through passive cultural preservation but actively reconstructs solidarity through ritual continuity, institutional adaptation, and symbolic resistance. The findings affirm the continued relevance of Durkheimian concepts while simultaneously demonstrating the need for theoretical revision when analyzing indigenous communities within postcolonial contexts characterized by unequal power relations and religious regulation. By developing the concepts of “hybrid solidarity” and “ritual resistance,” this study contributes to ongoing debates in sociology of religion, indigenous studies, and postcolonial sociology concerning how marginalized communities sustain identity, negotiate modernity, and resist structural domination in pluralistic societies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the Parmalim community maintains social cohesion and institutional continuity through the simultaneous operation of ritual preservation and organizational adaptation under conditions of structural marginalization. The findings demonstrate that collective rituals such as *Marari Sabtu*, *Sipaha Lima*, and other ceremonial practices continue to function as central mechanisms for transmitting ancestral values, strengthening collective identity, and reinforcing communal solidarity. At the same time, the Parmalim community has developed institutional strategies through formal religious organizations, legal advocacy, educational initiatives, and collaborations with civil society networks to negotiate with modern state structures. These findings indicate that indigenous communities do not merely survive through passive cultural preservation, but actively construct adaptive mechanisms that combine traditional values with institutional engagement.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its effort to extend Durkheimian solidarity theory within a non-Western indigenous context. The findings show that mechanical and organic solidarity do

not necessarily operate as sequential stages of social development. In the Parmalim case, mechanical solidarity is maintained through ritual participation, shared moral teachings, collective consciousness, and communal attachment, while organic solidarity develops through organizational differentiation, bureaucratic negotiation, legal advocacy, and cooperation with broader institutional networks. This simultaneous interaction is conceptualized as “hybrid solidarity.” In addition, the concept of “ritual resistance” explains how ritual practices function not only as mechanisms of social integration, but also as symbolic assertions of indigenous identity against dominant religious and bureaucratic structures. These concepts contribute to the sociology of religion, indigenous studies, and postcolonial sociology by showing that indigenous communities are active agents in sustaining cultural survival and negotiating social recognition.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the research focuses on a single indigenous belief community, so its findings cannot be generalized to all indigenous religious groups in Indonesia without further comparative studies. Second, although the twelve-month fieldwork period enabled the researcher to examine important ritual and institutional dynamics, it cannot fully capture long-term transformations across generations. Third, this study has not examined in depth the role of digital media, urban migration, tourism, and economic change in reshaping Parmalim identity and solidarity. Future research should therefore conduct comparative studies across different indigenous belief communities, explore intergenerational transformation more deeply, and examine how digitalization and broader socio-economic change influence the continuity, adaptation, and public representation of indigenous religious identities in contemporary Indonesia.

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