

Cultural and Religious Dimensions of *Marsialapari* and *Markobar* Traditions in the Mandailing Community

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Abstract

The decline of traditional communal practices in contemporary rural societies raises concerns about the sustainability of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and social solidarity. In the Mandailing community, the Marsialapari and Markobar traditions continue to be practiced, yet their roles as mechanisms of mutual cooperation are rarely examined systematically. This study aims to analyze the Marsialapari tradition as a form of collective agricultural labor and the Markobar tradition as a cooperative communicative practice in maintaining social solidarity and family formation within Mandailing society. This research applies a qualitative historical approach with a descriptive-narrative orientation. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving traditional leaders and community members who actively practice Marsialapari and Markobar. The fieldwork was conducted in May-July 2025. The results show that Marsialapari represents an institutionalized form of mutual cooperation based on voluntary participation, reciprocity, and rotational labor in rice field cultivation. This tradition strengthens social bonds, collective responsibility, and community unity through shared physical work. Meanwhile, Markobar functions as a form of social and communicative cooperation rooted in the Daliban Na Tolu system, serving as a collective deliberation process in family and customary ceremonies. Although its duration has shortened in modern practice, Markobar continues to preserve values of togetherness, consensus, and mutual respect. Together, these traditions function as cultural mechanisms that sustain gotong royong and reinforce social harmony in the Mandailing community.

Keywords: gotong royong, markobar, marsialapari, mandailing culture, social solidarity

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Introduction

Mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) as a form of social capital is considered the identity of the nation. It must be transformed in accordance with the current era so that it is relevant to the Times. *Gotong royong* as a concept has a high value and is closely related to the lives of farmers in agrarian societies (Arar et al., 2023). The *gotong royong* is a Javanese term, but not too old. Following an investigation by Mufidah & Hidayat (2019) in old Javanese literature, Madya Javanese (*kakawin, Kidung*) as well as New Javanese (*Babad, Serat*) do not mention this term. In the community environment, there is a need for interaction between people, such as creating cooperation attitudes in the community (Mufidah & Hidayat, 2019). Mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) is a social practice that plays a crucial role in strengthening interpersonal relationships and maintaining social harmony within communities.

Through mutual assistance activities, individuals are encouraged to cooperate, help one another, and build collective responsibility in social life. For Indonesian society, the culture of mutual cooperation is not merely understood and remembered as a tradition, but has become an inherent identity embedded within each individual. When this value is internalized by individuals, it naturally transforms into a shared national identity that characterizes the Indonesian (Saniah & Bastomi, 2022). In traditional societies, mutual cooperation functions as the main driving force behind various communal activities, including infrastructure development, conflict resolution, and the implementation of traditional as well as religious ceremonies. These activities demonstrate how social solidarity is built through collective participation and shared moral obligations among community members (Habibi et al., 2023). However, in the era of globalization, the value of mutual cooperation faces significant challenges. The rapid development of modernization, technology, and the influx of foreign cultural values have gradually shifted social orientations toward individualism, thereby eroding the collective culture that has long been upheld in Indonesian society. In the context of local Indonesian communities that continue to uphold the values of mutual cooperation and social solidarity, the Mandailing people predominantly inhabit the southwestern region of North Sumatra, Indonesia. This community is widely known for its strong social bonds and a well-

defined traditional governance structure that regulates social life and communal relations.

The Mandailing has long attracted the attention of academics and researchers for its unique ability to integrate external influences into the customary legal system and political leadership. In Mandailing, the spirit of mutual cooperation is strongly institutionalized through Marsialapari (mutual “pick up the day” to work in shifts) as well as *Dalihan Na Tolu* indigenous ecosystems and rites such as *margondang/borja*. Modernization, wage systems, and economic change (Vilà et al., 2020) triggers a shift in collective practices and potential polarization (between adat agama/modern values, old young generation, nomads natives). The Marsialapari tradition owned by the Mandailing tribe is in harmony with the economic conditions of the community, and this situation allows the Marsialapari tradition to remain viable. Over time the *Marsialapari* tradition began to lose its existence, including today.

The *Marsialapari* tradition is one of the cultural heritages of the Mandailing community that reflects the values of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and social togetherness in agricultural activities. However, today this tradition is becoming increasingly rare among the Mandailing people. This decline is influenced by various social and economic changes occurring within the community, including the development of modern agricultural technology and the implementation of wage-based labor systems. Technological advances in agriculture have made farming activities more practical and efficient, reducing the need for collective labor and shortening working time. As a result, people’s perspectives on togetherness, cooperation, and mutual assistance have gradually shifted toward more individual and economic-oriented practices.

In addition, the transition of agricultural commodities from rice farming to oil palm plantations since the early 2000s has also contributed to the gradual disappearance of the *Marsialapari* tradition among the Mandailing community (Batubara & Ayu, 2025). Unlike rice farming, which traditionally requires collective labor and intensive social interaction, oil palm cultivation tends to rely more on individual work patterns and paid labor systems. Consequently, traditional cooperation practices that once became an integral part of community life are now

less frequently implemented. Traditionally, *Marsialapari* applies a reciprocal work system among farming communities within a working group by using days as the unit of exchange. If person A works for one day on person B's farm, then person B is obliged to repay by working for one day on person A's farm (Savitri et al., 2022). This rotating system minimizes feelings of inequality or disadvantage because each member contributes the same portion of time and labor. More importantly, the system strengthens social bonds, trust, and collective responsibility among community members.

The *Marsialapari* tradition is therefore not merely an agricultural work system, but also a reflection of the social spirit and cultural identity of the Mandailing people. The implementation of this tradition is often accompanied by storytelling activities known as *marcarito*, where community members exchange stories, experiences, and jokes while working together in the fields. Usually, the most interesting stories revolve around the lives of young people (*naposo nauuli bulung*). Through these interactions, the tradition strengthens social relationships, reinforces brotherhood, and provides younger generations with opportunities to gain new knowledge and understand the cultural dynamics within society (Vekić, 2020).

The values of communication and togetherness embedded in *Marsialapari* are also closely related to other cultural traditions of the Angkola-Mandailing community, particularly the tradition of public speaking known as *mangkobar*. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and is commonly performed during customary ceremonies such as childbirth celebrations, house construction, weddings, pilgrimages, educational departures, opening new farmland, and funeral ceremonies. *Mangkobar* generally involves elders and married adults who deliver speeches and customary advice in accordance with the cultural principles of *Dalihan Na Tolu*. Although elders play the central role in the *mangkobar* ceremony, young people also participate actively in supporting the implementation of traditional events. They contribute through preparations, logistical arrangements, and assisting in various ceremonial activities. This involvement indirectly becomes a medium for cultural learning and character building for younger generations. Therefore, both *Marsialapari* and *mangkobar* traditions represent important cultural practices that preserve social

solidarity, intergenerational communication, and the cultural identity of the Mandailing community amidst ongoing social transformation and modernization.

Furthermore, marriage is an important event in the life cycle of the Mandailing people. Traditional marriage requires the participation of many people, including *kabanggi* (from the same clan as the man to be married), *mora* (from the same clan as his mother) and *boru's son* (from the same surname as her husband/brother), *raja raja panusunand pamusuk* (Kings from neighboring regions) and others. By following a series of quite complicated traditional events that take a long time, it is uncommon for weddings in the Mandailing community without complicated and expensive traditional ceremonies. Markobar is one of the marriage traditional rituals that are still performed today (Pajarianto et al., 2022). In addition, the problems that arise due to the *Markobar* time that seems long are often not concerned about prayer time. But over the *Markobar* tradition has undergone many changes. Mandailing wedding ceremony with *Markobar* tradition has strong Islamic values in the community. It can be seen from the pronunciation patterns applied in *Markobar* activities.

Mandailing is often referred to as the “Porch of Mecca” due to the fact that the vast majority of the Mandailing community practices Islam. Consequently, Islamic values play a significant role in the implementation of traditional ceremonies, including *markombur* (to have a conversation/story) while working in the garden, in the fields during breaks, in the market, while waiting/queuing or queuing at the clinic, waiting for the bus, and others (Ibrahim et al., 2023). In other words, markombur activities do not limit a person to have free time or not. They gather either during work or during a meeting of people in any place. Mandailing residents like to gather while doing *kombur* (a conversation/story) in an ethnocentric context or Mandailing cultural context. The phenomenon of mutual cooperation can be observed from various real conditions in society. For example, community participation in community service or other social activities continues to decline.

Based on an a preliminary study conducted through interviews with 20 informants from the Mandailing community in South Tapanuli

in May 2025, the findings indicate a decline in participation in collective social activities. The data show that only 30% of villagers (6 informants) were actively involved in charity and mutual assistance activities, while 45% (9 informants) preferred spending their time sitting at local stalls or engaging individually with social media. The remaining 25% (5 informants) reported limited or irregular participation in communal activities due to work demands and personal reasons. This condition is increasingly worrying in urban areas, where people tend to live in a more individualistic environment. Another factor is that urbanization takes many people from villages to cities, creating a more heterogeneous and individualistic social environment. In this environment, relationships between individuals become weaker due to a lack of belonging to the community. Modernization and global capitalism encourage societies to focus on individual productivity, often ignoring collective interests. Then, the weak character education that instills the values of mutual cooperation to the younger generation. Aisah et al., (2023) showed that only 32% of students consider social activities an important part of their lives, while the rest are more interested in activities of a personal nature, such as playing games or accessing digital media.

Piela (2022) found that the low role of indigenous institutions in preserving traditional values is one of the main causes of the decline in mutual cooperation. The influence of individualism in modern families as another factor that contributes to the fading of mutual aid values in the younger generation.

Method

This study employs qualitative historical research with a descriptive narrative approach to examine the historical development of the *Marsialapari* tradition within the Mandailing community. The qualitative approach is used to gain an in-depth understanding of social and cultural phenomena through the interpretation of meanings, practices, and historical experiences. The method used in this study is historical research by using steps in the form of heuristics is a technique or a way to find the source of data either by literature studies, direct observation in the field, as well as through interviews (Haryono, 2023). The historical research method was implemented through the heuristic stage, which involved identifying and collecting relevant data sources obtained from literature studies,

field observations, and interviews with community members and traditional figure in Mandailing.

Data collection was conducted using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. According to Thadi (2020) observation is the collection of data carried out observing and systematically recording the symptoms investigated. Observation and record directly carefully and systematically, not carelessly, to the phenomena that occur in the field to be studied. Observations made to informants is to understand and make meaning of an event or phenomenon in the situation that appears, in this study conducted a frank or disguised observation of the polarization of religion and culture in the spirit of mutual cooperation in the Mandailing community. The author has made observations on May 12, 2025 in one of the rice fields in Mandailing Regency.

Interview is a method of collecting data through face-to-face questioning between the researcher and the informant (Pulford, 2023). In this study, interviews were conducted with families involved in *Marsialapari* and *Markobar* in Mandailing Natal Regency. The type of interview used is a structured interview, where the researcher has prepared specific questions and possible alternative answers in advance to ensure the required information is obtained (Sugiyono, 2022). The author has conducted interviews with informants who carry out the *Marsialapari* tradition and involved four key informants selected purposively based on their knowledge and experience regarding the *Marsialapari* tradition. To ensure research ethics and protect informants' privacy, their identities were anonymized using coding. Informant I1 (male, 77 years old) and I2 (male, 78 years old), a *Natobang* (traditional elder), were interviewed in May 2025 at 08:20 WIB. Informant I3 (female, 75 years old) was interviewed during the same period, while I4 (female, 68 years old) was interviewed in June 2025 at 17:45 WIB. These informants provided historical narratives and contextual insights essential for understanding the development and continuity of the tradition in the Mandailing community.

In addition, the data obtained by library studies both books, journals and other writings in physical and online form that discuss it. The author has conducted a literature study by reviewing the sources in the form of theses, journals, and articles (Cahyaningsih & Karunia Assidik, 2021).

These data were analyzed descriptively to construct a coherent narrative regarding the continuity and transformation of the *Marsialapari* tradition in Mandailing society. According to Fuad et al., (2016) qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand central phenomena through broad and open-ended inquiry.

Results

Social Behaviorism approach in Mutual Aid culture “Gotong royong”

The findings of this study indicate that the revitalization of the *gotong royong* culture within the Mandailing community can be understood through a social behaviorism approach, which emphasizes observable behavior while also considering internal mental processes and shared meanings that underlie social actions. These findings are derived from interviews, field observations, and documentation, all of which constitute the primary data of this study.

Interview Findings

Informant I1, a *Natobang* (traditional elder), explicitly stated “*Gotong royong* is a collective responsibility passed down from our ancestors. It is not only about helping each other, but also about maintaining harmony and respecting customary norms.” Similarly, informants I2 and I3 emphasized that participation in *gotong royong* strengthens emotional ties and reinforces social solidarity. Informant I2 stated “Through *gotong royong*, we feel closer to one another, and it builds a sense of belonging within the community.” These interview data clearly indicate that internal awareness and shared cultural values are key factors sustaining cooperative behavior in the Mandailing community.

Data from in-depth interviews with key informants (I1–I4) reveal that *gotong royong* is perceived not merely as a social obligation but as a moral value rooted in *keikhlasan* (sincerity), *kebersamaan* (togetherness), and *kepercayaan* (mutual trust). Informant I1, a *Natobang* (traditional elder), explicitly stated “*Gotong royong* has been part of our lives since the time of our ancestors. It is not something we are forced to do, but something we feel responsible for as a community. If one person has a problem, others will come to help without being asked.”

This statement indicates that *gotong royong* is deeply embedded as a collective responsibility closely linked to local wisdom and customary

norms. Similarly, Informant I2 emphasized the emotional dimension of participation “When we join *gotong royong*, we don’t just work together, but we also build closeness. We talk, laugh, and strengthen our relationships with neighbors.” Informant I3 also highlighted the importance of trust and solidarity “If there is no *kepercayaan* (trust), *gotong royong* cannot run well. We help each other because we believe others will do the same for us in the future.” These interview data clearly demonstrate that internal awareness and shared cultural values play a crucial role in sustaining cooperative behavior within the Mandailing community.

Field observations further strengthen these findings

The researcher directly observed *gotong royong* practices in several communal activities, such as repairing village roads, preparing traditional ceremonies, and assisting neighbors during social events. During these activities, older community members were consistently more active and engaged, while younger individuals tended to prioritize personal activities or were less involved. This observable behavioral pattern constitutes an important empirical finding, indicating generational differences in participation. It also supports the social behaviorism perspective, which views social actions as responses shaped not only by environmental stimuli but also by internalized values such as *keikhlasan*, *kebersamaan*, and *kepercayaan*.

Documentation data, including village records, photographs, and written archives, further confirm that *gotong royong* remains embedded in social life, although its frequency has declined. These documents constitute an important empirical basis of this study as they provide visual and written evidence of communal practices. Several forms of documentation were identified below.

Village Administrative Records

Written records from village meetings (*notulen rapat desa*) explicitly include *gotong royong* activities as part of formal community programs. For example, a documented schedule of collective work (*jadwal kerja bakti*) shows routine activities such as road repair and environmental cleaning conducted on specific dates.

Photographic Evidence

Photographs collected during the research depict community members

participating in *gotong royong*, such as residents jointly repairing village roads, groups preparing traditional ceremonies, and neighbors assisting each other during social events. These images visually demonstrate cooperative behavior and intergenerational interaction, although they also reveal that participation is more dominant among older community members.

Symbolic and Cultural Artifacts

Certain symbols, such as communal tools (*alat kerja bersama*) and shared spaces (*ruang publik desa*), reflect the collective nature of *gotong royong*. These artifacts indicate that cooperation is not only practiced but also materially supported within the community structure.

Collective Work Lists and Attendance Notes

Documents showing attendance lists for *gotong royong* activities indicate fluctuating participation rates. These records provide concrete evidence that, while the practice still exists, its intensity has decreased over time, particularly among younger generations. These various forms of documentation serve as strong supporting evidence that *gotong royong* is still formally recognized as part of local governance and social organization, and continues to function as social capital within the Mandailing community. Based on the integration of documentation data with interview and observation findings, this study claims that the persistence of *gotong royong* culture in the Mandailing community is influenced by the interaction between observable cooperative behavior and internalized moral values such as *keikhlasan*, *kebersamaan*, and *kepercayaan*. Although modernization and social change have reduced the frequency of *gotong royong*, the values embedded within it such as solidarity, mutual help, and togetherness remain aligned with the principles of *Pancasila* and continue to shape community behavior.

Instill and strengthen the value of mutual cooperation in the era of globalization

Based on interview data, field observations, and documentation, this study finds that the value of *gotong royong* within the Mandailing community is experiencing a transformation rather than a total disappearance. These findings constitute the empirical results of this study, while theories from Paulo Freire and Anthony Giddens are used to interpret the data. Interviews with informants I1–I4 indicate

that *gotong royong* is still understood as a moral and social obligation grounded in *kebersamaan* (togetherness), *keikhlasan* (sincerity), and *solidaritas sosial* (social solidarity). Informant I1 emphasized: “Even though people are now busy with their own work, *gotong royong* is still important for us. When there is a village clean-up or a traditional ceremony, people will still come because it is part of our responsibility as a community.” This statement shows that *gotong royong* continues to function as a social reference in communal life despite the influence of modernization. Informant I2 highlighted the value of sincerity: “We participate in *gotong royong* not because we are forced, but because of *keikhlasan*. Helping each other has become a habit that we learned from our elders.”

Meanwhile, Informant I3 pointed out the shift among younger generations: “Young people today rarely join *gotong royong* activities, but they still understand that it is part of our culture and identity.” Informant I4 added: “*Gotong royong* is still there, but not as strong as before. People are more individualistic now, but when there is an important event, they still come together.” These interview data clearly indicate that although the intensity of participation has changed, the core values of *gotong royong* *kebersamaan*, *keikhlasan*, and *solidaritas sosial* remain embedded in the collective consciousness of the Mandailing community.

Field observations reveal that *gotong royong* practices are selectively performed. Activities such as repairing irrigation channels, preparing communal events, and assisting neighbours during family ceremonies were observed to involve primarily older community members. Younger individuals were more often seen engaging in individual activities, including the use of smartphones. This observation supports the interview data indicating a shift in participation patterns rather than the disappearance of cooperative values. Documentation in the form of village records, photographs, and community meeting notes confirms that *gotong royong* remains institutionally recognized. Schedules for communal work (*kerja bakti*) and written agreements for collective activities demonstrate that cooperation is still formally embedded in community governance. These documents provide supporting evidence that *gotong royong* remains an important form of social capital, although its implementation has become less intensive over time.



Figure 1. *Community Service Schedule and Mutual Cooperation Agreement*

Based on Figure 1, this study claims that education both formal and informal plays a strategic role in sustaining *gotong royong* values amid globalization. While modernization introduces individualistic tendencies, the persistence of cooperative practices indicates that *gotong royong* can be revitalized through context-sensitive educational and social initiatives. The role of education in instilling and strengthening the value of mutual cooperation in the era of globalization is very strategic. Through theory-based approaches to critical education, social learning, diffusion innovation, and social change, education can be an effective tool for preserving and adapting this value into the modern context. With the support of all parties, the value of *gotong royong* can continue to be an integral part of the cultural identity of the Indonesian people, despite the challenges of globalization (Pane et al., 2019).

The value of mutual assistance through local community empowerment
Empirical findings from this study show that the strengthening of *gotong royong* values is closely linked to local community empowerment initiatives. Informants reported that community-based activities such as cooperative farming groups, neighbourhood savings schemes, and collective support for children's education serve as contemporary expressions of *gotong royong*. Informant I2 stated that these initiatives allow traditional values to adapt to modern economic and social needs without losing their original meaning. "*Gotong royong* activities have

now adapted to the current conditions. Sometimes it doesn't always take the form of physical work together, but can also involve other contributions such as funds or coordination. However, the basic values remain the same: helping each other and maintaining togetherness in society." (I2).

Observations of community meetings and documentation of local programs indicate that empowerment-based activities encourage active participation and shared responsibility. Written program guidelines and photographs of collective activities illustrate how *gotong royong* is transformed into organized, sustainable social practices. This study claims that *gotong royong* can be preserved and revitalized through community empowerment that emphasizes local potential, collective decision-making, and adaptive strategies in response to globalization.

Table 1. Results of Observations and Documentation of Community Empowerment Programs

Data Source	Main Findings	Evidence Form
Observation of community deliberation meetings	Empowerment-based activities encourage active participation of community members and strengthen a sense of shared responsibility	Field observation notes
Documentation of local programs	<i>Gotong royong</i> (mutual cooperation) is implemented in a more structured manner within community programs	Activity photos, program archives
Program guideline documents	There are established rules and guidelines for implementing community-based participatory activities	Written program documents
Visual documentation	Collective activities demonstrate community cooperation in various social activities	Photos of community service activities and meetings

Table 1 demonstrates that community empowerment-based activities encourage active participation and strengthen shared social responsibility. Mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) is no longer spontaneous, but has transformed into a more organized and sustainable social practice through community programs. Furthermore, documentation in the form of written guidelines and photographs of

activities demonstrates that the values of gotong royong remain intact but are developed through an empowerment approach that emphasizes local potential, collective decision-making, and adaptive strategies to address social changes resulting from globalization.

This approach is relevant to the theory of community empowerment introduced by Paulo Freire, which emphasizes the importance of critical awareness and active participation in strengthening local values in the midst of global change (Sutrisna, 2021). In his theory of Community Empowerment, Freire highlights the importance of identifying and harnessing local potential as the first step to creating social change. The value of gotong royong can be transformed through community empowerment initiatives that focus on preserving local culture while adapting to the needs of the times. For example, local communities can develop *gotong royong* value-based programs that are relevant to the needs of modern society, such as community-based cooperatives, social activities to support the education of underprivileged children, or community-based environmental management. Through this activity, the value of mutual cooperation is not only maintained, but also given a new form that fits the context of globalization. Besides that, community empowerment can also be fostered through education that incorporates local uniqueness and cultural values (Saerozi et al., 2024)

Marsialapari Culture The Principle of Helpfulness

Based on data obtained through interviews, field observations, and documentation, this study finds that *Marsialapari* remains a living tradition of *gotong royong* within the Mandailing community, even among those who reside outside their ancestral homeland. The following subsections present the empirical findings of this study. Interviews with key informants (I1–I4) reveal that *Marsialapari* is understood as a reciprocal labor system grounded in mutual agreement regarding the number of working days. Informant I1 explained that the term *Marsialapari* originates from the word *alap* (to call or take) and *ari* (day), meaning to help one another by exchanging labor days rather than material compensation. Informants emphasized that this tradition is primarily practiced in agricultural activities, particularly in rice fields and gardens, and is carried out voluntarily and with a sense of joy (*sukarela* dan *ikhlas*).

Informant I2 stated that if a person assists another for several days, the recipient is morally obliged to return the same number of working days in the future. This reciprocal mechanism reflects strong mutual trust and reinforces long-term social relationships within the community. Field observations confirm that *Marsialapari* is still practiced, especially among older farmers. During observation sessions, community members were seen working collectively in rice fields without any form of monetary exchange. The atmosphere of cooperation appeared informal and cheerful, indicating that participation was driven by social obligation and emotional attachment rather than economic incentives. These observations support interview data showing that *Marsialapari* functions as a non-material form of social solidarity. Documentation in the form of photographs, informal farming schedules, and notes from community discussions further supports the existence of *Marsialapari*.

These documents illustrate collective work arrangements based on mutual agreement and trust, without written contracts or financial rewards. Such documentation demonstrates that *Marsialapari* operates through customary norms rather than formal institutional mechanisms. Based on these empirical findings, this study claims that *Marsialapari* represents a distinctive form of social solidarity in Mandailing society that emphasizes non-material reciprocity. The tradition embodies key cultural values such as *bolong* (affection), *domu* (unity), and *adat na tolu* the social structure consisting of *kabanggi*, *mora*, and *anak boru* which collectively foster togetherness and mutual responsibility. Furthermore, this study finds that *Marsialapari* is not only a cultural heritage but also carries spiritual and religious significance, as informants associate the practice with ancestral beliefs and moral teachings. The persistence of this tradition reflects the Mandailing philosophy of life, as expressed in the saying “*ndang tarporsan sabalak pardingdingan*” (it is impossible to lift the wall alone), which underscores the importance of cooperation, solidarity, and mutual trust in social life. *Marsialapari* reflects mechanical solidarity according to Emile Durkheim, because people engage in the same activities and hold collective values and responsibilities (Principle et al., 2020).

The absence of a *wage* system in this tradition is strong evidence that work is done voluntarily, driven by a sense of mutual belonging and mutual responsibility. Local cultural values such as *mata guru*

roba sisean (mata as a teacher of the heart) show that experience, knowledge, and inner sensitivity are highly valued in work. The findings of this study demonstrate that *Marsialapari* is sustained by a strong sense of mutual belonging and shared responsibility within the Mandailing community. This finding is derived primarily from interview and observation data. Based on interviews with key informants (I1–I4), *Marsialapari* is understood not merely as a technical system of labor exchange, but as a moral practice rooted in mutual trust and inner awareness. Informants explained that local cultural values such as *mata guru roba sisean* which emphasizes experience, knowledge, and sensitivity of the heart guide individuals in carrying out work responsibly and sincerely. According to informant I1, participation in *Marsialapari* is driven by personal conscience rather than external enforcement, reinforcing social bonds and long-term reciprocity.

The field observations confirm that *Marsialapari* functions as a cooperative agricultural practice conducted without material rewards. During farming activities, community members were observed working collectively in rice fields while maintaining informal coordination and shared responsibility. These observations indicate that cooperation is based on mutual trust and solidarity rather than contractual or economic considerations. The absence of monetary exchange observed in these activities supports the understanding of *Marsialapari* as a non-material form of social solidarity. Documentation in the form of photographs and community notes further supports the persistence of *Marsialapari* as a cultural heritage.

Visual records of collective farming activities illustrate how traditional cooperation continues to structure rural social life, even amid the pressures of modernization and individualism. Based on the integration of interview, observation, and documentation data, this study claims that *Marsialapari* represents a concrete form of social solidarity within rural Batak Mandailing communities.



Figure 2. Collective farming activity in Marsialapari tradition

Figure 2 shows the implementation of *Marsialapari* in collective agricultural work, where community members jointly participate in rice farming activities as a form of social cooperation. The tradition reflects cooperation grounded in mutual trust, solidarity, and shared responsibility in completing agricultural work without material rewards. Furthermore, *Marsialapari* is deeply rooted in the Mandailing worldview that upholds togetherness, as expressed in the saying “*ndang tarporsan sabalak pardingdingan*” (it is impossible to lift the wall alone). These findings confirm that *Marsialapari* is not only a practical agricultural solution but also a cultural mechanism that strengthens the social fabric of rural communities in the face of modernization and growing individualism.

The expression “*it is impossible to lift a wall alone*” highlights the importance of collective effort in community life. The tradition of *Marsialapari* reflects this principle by emphasizing cooperation and mutual assistance among community members. This practice is closely aligned with Émile Durkheim’s concept of mechanical solidarity, in which social cohesion is formed through shared values, beliefs, and collective activities (Principle et al., 2020). The absence of a wage-based system in *Marsialapari* further demonstrates that social relationships in this tradition are built on voluntarism, mutual trust, and a strong sense of belonging rather than economic incentives.

Interview data from key informants (I1–I4) indicate that *Marsialapari* is guided not only by technical cooperation but also by moral and cultural principles. Informants consistently emphasized that experience, knowledge, and inner sensitivity serve as important guidelines in carrying out collective work, as reflected in the local philosophy “*mata guru roba sisean*”. According to the informants, this philosophy teaches individuals to work conscientiously, responsibly, and with consideration for others, thereby reinforcing mutual trust within the community. Field observations further confirm the practical application of these values. During *Marsialapari* activities in agricultural settings, community members were observed coordinating work informally, relying on shared understanding rather than explicit instructions.

The cooperative atmosphere and the absence of material rewards indicate that participation is motivated by social responsibility and collective awareness rather than economic incentives. In addition, documentation data, including photographs of collective farming activities and informal community records, demonstrate the continuity of *Marsialapari* over time. These documents provide evidence that the tradition has been sustained across generations and remains embedded in everyday social practices. Based on the convergence of interview, observation, and documentation data, this study concludes that social solidarity constitutes a strong foundation for the sustainability of *Marsialapari*. The persistence of this tradition reflects its role not only as a cultural heritage but also as a social mechanism that strengthens the Mandailing community’s capacity to work together, help one another, and act *babu-membahu* in facing social and economic challenges.

Markobar Tradition as Local Wisdom of Mandailing People

Markobar tradition or *markobar* custom is a local culture that is very influential for a family honor “surnamed” or “clan”, where as a community group of individuals will have dignity or honor if he is expert with *markobar* or has expertise in speaking or marhata-hata and vice versa as well. The honor of a family is a great shock if there is no reliable personnel or family members in the *markobar* custom or a king in the Mandailing clan will be scratched by his authority if he cannot make a speech at the customary Assembly. “*Markobar*” is performed in Mandailing traditional ceremonies, one of which is marriage. In the

traditional ceremony of marga mandailing *markobar* contains advice and speech to strengthen the bride and groom about the circumstances and life that will be lived. In relation to the traditional philosophy of Mandailing States, the word *dupang* (*Hata-Hata do dupang*), words that can pay off debt (*bata-bata do panggarar debi*). That is, although the problem has been faced very urgency, but through the cleverness to negotiate and talk all the problems, problems that occur can be resolved properly. Therefore, debts can also be resolved through deliberation or wise negotiation (Aripin, 2018).

Interview with I3 also explained bellow.

“in the Markobar tradition, Dalian Na Tolu elements not only have to be surnamed people in other words not from the original Mandailing community, there are also from other tribes not even surnamed can also be part of Dalian Na Tolu, with notes indeed have settled in one region and society in the region. This is an important element in intercultural communication, namely mutual respect for members of other cultures” (I3).

Community culture is part of the identity of the Mandailing people. Dissent is highly valued by Mandailing people. *Markobar* is not just an ordinary traditional ceremony, there are meaningful messages conveyed. *Markobar* is the art of communicating so anyone can definitely do the most important thing is there is a will in him. *Markobar* can also create social interactions between people of different ethnic backgrounds. In intercultural communication that creates symbols in which the characteristics of communicators are contained that are seen in the experience of interpersonal communication processes between those who are different ethnicities. Therefore, by studying intercultural communication, it is possible to understand the relationship between culture and communication, because it is through the influence of culture that people learn to communicate, and perceive their world through the categories, concepts and labels that culture generates (Rouf Dalimunthe, interview in May 2025)

Discussion

One of the main challenges in maintaining the value of *gotong royong* is a change in the increasingly individualistic pattern of social interaction. The theory of symbolic interactionism (symbolic interactionism) by George Herbert Mead can be used to understand how changes in social meaning affect the practice of mutual aid (Koto et al., 2024). According to Mead, social actions are formed through symbolic interactions in which individuals assign meaning to their actions based on experience and the social environment. In this context, globalization, more individualistic symbols, such as material success or personal freedom, which often contradict the value of togetherness in mutual assistance (Cohen et al., 2017). Therefore, the empowerment of local communities must involve efforts to reconstruct the meaning of *gotong royong* in order to remain relevant to evolving social symbols.

For example, in some villages in Indonesia, the *gotong royong* value-based empowerment programs have been carried out through the development of village cooperatives. This cooperative is not only an economic means, but also a container to strengthen social relations between citizens. Rahmawati (2021) shows that village cooperatives based on the principle of mutual assistance are able to improve economic welfare while strengthening social relations. Through cooperatives, citizens learn to share resources with each other, such as business capital, means of production, or skills training, which reflects the spirit of mutual aid in a modern context (Turner et al., 2011). In addition, programs like this also help citizens to stay connected to their local culture while taking advantage of opportunities from globalization. The Mandailing community is important to involve themselves in the village cooperative membership in support of cultural polarization efforts in the form of empowerment based on the spirit of mutual cooperation as part of the cultural and social identity of the community.

Gotong royong revives Dalihan Na Tolu (horja/party context)

Interview data collected from religious and traditional leaders indicate that *gotong royong* plays a central role in revitalizing the values of *dalihan na tolu*, particularly in the context of *horja* (traditional ceremonies). One religious leader (Informant I5, *kariaman*) explained that mutual cooperation is understood as *saling pengertian*, *saling membormati*, and *saling menolong*, because humans inherently depend

on one another. This principle is locally referred to as *marsisarion*, meaning mutual remembrance of others' services and contributions. According to the informant, every individual possesses both strengths and weaknesses; therefore, cooperation becomes a moral necessity in social life.

Field observations conducted during communal activities in *borja* settings show that the values of *dalihan na tolu* involving *kabanggi*, *mora*, and *anak boru*—are manifested through clearly distributed roles and responsibilities. Community members were observed assisting one another during both *siriaon* (joyful events) and *siluluton* (mourning events). These observations confirm that *gotong royong* is not only a normative concept but also an actively practiced social mechanism. Including notes from customary meetings and photographs of ceremonial preparations, further support the persistence of cooperative practices rooted in *dalihan na tolu*. Written records indicate that communal obligations in *borja* are still formally acknowledged and socially enforced through customary norms.

Based on the integration of interview, observation, and documentation data, this study claims that *gotong royong* remains a vital instrument for sustaining *dalihan na tolu* values in Mandailing society. The practice reinforces mutual responsibility and social balance among individuals, particularly in traditional ceremonial contexts. Interview and observation data from this study indicate that participation in *Marsialapari* a traditional form of mutual cooperation among the Mandailing people has declined due to modernization and shifts in social values. Informants noted that younger generations are less involved in agricultural cooperation compared to older community members. To contextualize these findings, documentation and secondary data from previous research with Kariaman (religious leaders), revealed that mutual help is mutual understanding, respect, and mutual help each other because one human being needs another human being in terms of a custom called *marsisarion* or mutual remembrance of the services of others. In this life, it must be recognized that each has weaknesses and has advantages, so that they need each other from one individual to another (Pelupessy et al., 2025).

These studies were used as comparative references. The study conducted in Kayulaut Village, Mandailing Natal Regency, employed a qualitative method using observation, interviews, and documentation, involving traditional leaders, village heads, and community members. The findings identify four key preservation strategies for the sustainability of the *Marsialapari* tradition. Drawing on comparative literature, this study argues that the revitalization of *Marsialapari* requires strengthening the values of *gotong royong* within the *Dalihan Na Tolu* framework, supported by the active involvement of religious leaders, customary institutions, and community-based initiatives. The informants in this study consisted of traditional leaders, village heads, and community members who actively participate in the tradition. The results indicate that the preservation of *Marsialapari* is carried out through four main strategies: (1) preventive efforts through the socialization of cultural values, (2) preservative efforts through the involvement of younger generations and collaboration with village governments, (3) curative efforts through the resolution of social constraints, and (4) adaptive efforts through adjustment to socio-economic changes. Furthermore, customary leaders play a central role in ensuring the continuity of the *Marsialapari* tradition as an important element of Mandailing cultural identity.

Adat strengthened by religion & gotong royong as the core

Interview data constitute the primary source for understanding the implementation of the *margondang* custom. According to Informant I6 (male, traditional leader/*tokoh adat*), the *margondang* ceremony is conducted on a day jointly determined through deliberation (*musyawarah*) involving kings (*raja adat*), families, and the wider community. The ceremony is typically held at the groom's house and requires collective preparation rooted in *gotong royong*. The informant explained that several important ceremonial attributes are used during the event, including *ulos* (traditional woven cloth), *gondang* (traditional drums), *baju godang* (traditional attire), *tandok* (a rattan container), pandan mats, betel leaves, areca nut, *sumping*, and *subul*. These explanations reflect the informant's lived experience and cultural knowledge regarding the ritual process. Observation data support the interview findings. During field observations at a wedding ceremony, the researcher observed that the preparation and execution

of *margondang* involved extensive community participation. Each stage of the ceremony was carried out collectively, indicating that *gotong royong* functions as the core mechanism enabling the ritual to proceed smoothly. Community members were observed contributing labor, materials, and time without expecting material compensation.

Documentation data, including photographs of ceremonial stages and notes from customary proceedings, further corroborate these findings. The documentation illustrates how religious values and customary norms are intertwined in the *margondang* ritual and institutionalized through collective practice. Based on the triangulation of interview, observation, and documentation data, this study claims that *margondang* is an expression of *adat* that is strengthened by religious values, with *gotong royong* serving as its core foundation. The ceremony functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as a social mechanism that reinforces solidarity, shared responsibility, and communal harmony within the Mandailing community as interview quotation with I6 below.

“Ima dignity nami as bayo pangolin. Onma na mandok martabat dohot rasa horas na godang di roba. Margondang on dianggap songon kehormatan na godang di huta nami. Asa adong ma paling dang satu jolo sian sabagas i na ikut mambaben margondang di sattiap generasi. Molo dang boi, maka partisipasi sian naposo na tua (ompung-ompung) do na mangibut. Ndang adong margondang, dang boi do dapotan gelar kehormatan, alana adat i songon tanda martabat sosial di huta.” (Interview with Informant I6, traditional leader of Mount Manaon Village, May 4, 2025)

Based on the interview with I6, *margondang* is not merely a ceremonial practice but a symbolic mechanism for affirming social dignity and collective identity within the Mandailing community. The informant’s statement indicates that participation in *margondang* is closely associated with honor (*kehormatan*) and social recognition. This finding suggests that the continuity of the tradition is driven by intergenerational responsibility, where each generation bears a moral obligation to uphold cultural prestige through ritual participation. Furthermore, the emphasis on involving at least one family member per generation demonstrates that *margondang* functions as a

medium for transmitting cultural values, reinforcing social solidarity, and maintaining the hierarchical balance embedded in Mandailing customary life. This supports the broader finding of this study that *adat* practices strengthened by *gotong royong* and religious values serve as essential pillars in sustaining community cohesion.

Practical togetherness in the performance of rites

Based on this interview with I6, *margondang* and *horja godang* function not only as ceremonial traditions but also as social mechanisms that reinforce collective solidarity. The informant's emphasis on the smooth execution of the ritual highlights the central role of *gotong royong* in coordinating communal participation and resolving potential obstacles. This finding indicates that togetherness (*kebersamaan*) is not merely symbolic but is actively practiced through shared responsibilities during ritual activities.

Furthermore, the perceived benefits of *margondang* such as strengthening kinship ties and sustaining brotherhood demonstrate that customary rituals contribute to the long-term resilience of social relationships within the Mandailing community. This supports the broader conclusion of this study that *adat* practices rooted in communal cooperation serve as vital instruments for maintaining social harmony and cultural continuity as the interview quotation bellow.

“Margondang atau horja godang itu mangandung nilai kebersamaan na godang. Na iida do bita di batopan ni adat on, saleleng margondang i, masyarakat dobot keluarga saling marsada, marsiurupan, asa adat i marjalan denggan, so adong balangan. Untung ni margondang on, ia do manambah rap marsada di antara masyarakat dobot keluarga di Huta Gunung Manaon, jadi hubungan silaturahmi tetap kuat dobot langgeng.”

Translation: “The *margondang* or *horja godang* ceremony embodies the value of togetherness, which can be clearly observed from the beginning of the ritual until its completion without significant obstacles. The implementation of this custom through a community-based approach strengthens social cohesion among community members and families in Mount Manaon Village, ensuring that the ritual proceeds smoothly and that brotherhood is maintained in a lasting manner.”

Modernization challenge

The interview data from Informants I7 and I8 indicate that *margondang* functions as a multidimensional cultural practice encompassing social, moral, educational, and religious values. Togetherness, solidarity, and *gotong royong* emerge as core principles that regulate communal interaction during ritual implementation. These findings corroborate earlier interviews with traditional leaders, demonstrating consistency across different social groups within the community. Additionally, the challenge of modernization identified by Informant I8 highlights a generational gap in cultural engagement. Reduced interest among younger community members reflects broader socio-cultural changes influenced by globalization and individualism. However, the emphasis on education and active participation suggests that cultural transmission remains possible through adaptive strategies. This supports the conclusion of this study that the sustainability of *margondang* depends on the integration of traditional values with contemporary social realities as the interview quotation below.

“Adat margondang itu banyak mengandung nilai sosial, seperti kebersamaan, solidaritas, tolong-menolong, pendidikan, pelestarian budaya, serta rasa tanggung jawab dan kewajiban sosial sebagaimana juga disampaikan oleh Bapak Ramlan dan Ali Sabbana. Selain itu, di dalamnya juga terdapat nilai kepercayaan dan keagamaan, karena ada doa-doa dan ritual yang menunjukkan keyakinan kepada Tuhan. Hal ini mengajarkan pentingnya hubungan dengan Yang Maha Kuasa serta memperkuat moral dan etika dalam kehidupan sehari-hari” (Informant I7).

Translation: “The margondang tradition contains many social values, including togetherness and solidarity, mutual assistance, education, and cultural preservation, as well as a sense of responsibility and social obligation, as also expressed by other community figures. Furthermore, this tradition incorporates religious values through prayers and rituals that reflect belief in God. It teaches the community about the importance of maintaining a relationship with the Almighty and strengthens moral and ethical behavior in daily life.”

“Tantangan terbesar saat ini adalah modernisasi yang membuat generasi muda kurang tertarik terhadap tradisi ini. Namun, melalui

pendidikan dan keterlibatan aktif masyarakat, kami tetap berusaha menjaga dan melestarikan margondang sebagai bagian penting dari identitas budaya Batak Mandailing”. (Informant I8)

Translation: “One of the major challenges faced today is modernization, which has led to declining interest among younger generations in this tradition. Nevertheless, through education and direct involvement, efforts continue to preserve margondang as an essential element of Batak Mandailing cultural identity.”

Martial arts in overseas (West Pasaman) & cross-ethnic collaboration

Field interviews indicate that the practice of *Marsialapari* in the Mandailing community has significantly declined with the introduction of modern agricultural technology. I8 explained as quotation bellow.

“I was the first person in this village to own a rice thresher. I bought it around the 1980s. Since this machine has been available, people no longer need to work together like they used to.” (Informant I8)

This field data demonstrates a shift in agricultural practices from a system based on human labor and collective labor to the use of machines that allow for individual work. Based on this data, it can be analyzed that the modernization of agricultural technology is one of the main factors causing the erosion of the *Marsialapari* tradition. The tradition, which originally relied on togetherness, mutual cooperation, and the values of *holong* (compassion) and *domu* (unity), is slowly losing its relevance because agricultural work no longer requires the participation of many people. In addition to technology, the implementation of a *wage* system, the introduction of palm oil, and the development of a rational economic mindset (profit and loss) have also accelerated the shift from collective social work to individual work.

As a result, *Marsialapari* is no longer understood as a social obligation but is instead seen as less efficient in the context of the modern economy. Thus, the erosion of the *Marsialapari* tradition is not solely caused by the loss of cultural values, but rather by changes in the social and economic structure of Mandailing society triggered by modernization. These field findings align with the view that technological development is directly proportional to increasing human needs. The more complex a society's needs, the greater the

incentive to use technology to meet those needs (Principle et al., 2020). However, on the other hand, technological development also has the potential to shift traditional social values, including the culture of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) that is deeply rooted in rural communities. Research by (Principle et al., 2020) also confirms that the use of agricultural machinery since the 1980s in the Mandailing region has changed community work patterns and gradually reduced the intensity of collective work practices such as *Marsialapari*.

The Implementation of The Wage System

Based on interviews that the author did with I4 explained that the application of the *wage* system has existed since ancient times but in the past the *wages* given in the form of rice and not related to work that requires a lot of people such as cutting rice grass. As less and less agricultural land is replaced with *wage*-earning plantations, it is increasingly used, especially for residents who have a lot of land, this is supported by the inability to cultivate their own land (Ibrahim et al., 2023) The implementation of the wage system that has been described has slowly shifted the *Marsialapari* tradition system. The *Marsialapari* tradition does not use a wage system in returning services but is rewarded with energy anyway (Aripin, 2018). The results showed that the preservation of tradition is carried out through four forms of efforts, namely: preventive (socialization of cultural values), preservative (involvement of the younger generation and cooperation with the village government), curative (settlement of social constraints), and adaptive (adjustment to socio-economic conditions).

Indigenous leaders play a central role in maintaining the continuity of *Marsialapari* tradition as Mandailing's local cultural identity. *Marsialapari* tradition built Mandailing community contains six main values, namely the *Marsialapari* tradition contains divine (religious) values reflected in each stage of the activity, which always begins with prayer, such as reciting the *Basmalah* (the name of the Lord) before planting rice and expressing a vow for a successful harvest. This practice reflects the strong faith of the Mandailing people, the majority of whom are Muslim. Furthermore, *Marsialapari* also embodies socio-cultural values, inherited from their ancestors, still preserved to this day. These values are evident in the harmonious division of roles in the rice fields, with men performing the *mordang* (digging planting

holes) and women performing the *manyame* (planting rice seedlings), demonstrating collective work based on traditions and customs passed down through generations.

Furthermore, Marsialapari embodies the strong value of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), reflected in the practice of taking turns helping each other from the preparation stage to the closing of the work. This collaborative work fosters a spirit of togetherness and strengthens relationships among residents. This tradition also fosters moral values, such as responsibility, family character, and prioritizing the common good over personal gain. Furthermore, tolerance is fostered, as all community members participate without discrimination based on clan, social status, or economic circumstances. Rich and poor, strong and weak, all participate equally. This practice also fosters the value of hospitality, where *Marsialapari* serves as a social gathering space that strengthens bonds of kinship, unity, and harmony within the village community. *Markobar* in the context of Mandailing culture is interpreted as an official conversation held in Mandailing traditional ceremonies both in the event of *siriaon* (party in a happy atmosphere) and *siluluton* (party in an atmosphere of grief).

As a norm that is passed down from generation to generation, markobar has an ordinance that is a common convention of the Mandailing community. In practice, although there are some variations in the process of narration and spoken content. However, the cultural heritage which is considered as one of the sacred cultures is still carried out in Mandailing traditional ceremonies (Chandra et al., 2023). In Mandailing tradition, the wedding event is called haroan boru which means the presence of a mora girl in the family of a young man with the intention of building a new household. The existence of *boru* is very important in the kinship system of the Mandailing people. In traditional ceremonies, among others, at the time of the delivery of goods to the bride, the first to speak is the mother. So is the delivery of custom fabrics and other goods. Boru is the core of the boru children, one of the elements of *Dalian Na Tolu* whose role is very dominant in the kinship life of the Mandailing people (Siregar, 2024).

Dalian Na Tolu consultation in the male family, decided to send boru, kahanggi and hatobangon's children to the girl's house to be

proposed to. This envoy was assigned to Markobar boru. The men's envoy first manopot kahanggi in the village girl. The group stayed overnight in the village, and the messenger of the men who would previously become kahanggi was boru's son from the girl's father's family. The newly appointed envoy and kahanggi spoke in detail about everything related to *Markobar boru*. As a condition for speaking adat, the son of *boru utusan* offered *burangir* (betel leaf), followed by the laying of bodil somba as a willingness to be punished in case of mistakes they made (Saniah & Bastomi, 2022). This *Markobar* tradition is an activity that is considered sacred because it is based on the *Dalian Na Tolu* social system which is used as the basis for the procedure in the implementation of Mandailing traditional ceremonies. In the past, this *Markobar* tradition took a relatively long time and sometimes did not care about prayer time, but with the development of the times, this *Markobar* tradition has been increasingly eroded and constantly changing in its implementation. If in the past this activity could take up to hours and all those involved in *Markobar* must convey their intentions and goals. Unlike today, *Markobar* activities are increasingly shortened in time and schedule but still in accordance with existing customs (Aripin, 2018).

The value of local wisdom is found in the Mandailing custom, namely the *markobar* custom where the value of local wisdom is a long experience that can be used to guide good behavior in an individual where the value of local wisdom is inseparable from a community (community environment), religious leaders and leaders from the region, no exception from other villages in Mandailing Regency (Saniah & Bastomi, 2022). Local wisdom is said to be a form of belief, understanding, insight, and knowledge and Customs and ethics that can influence human behavior (H et al., 2023). The meaning of local wisdom is the result of the community through the experiences of a society which is not necessarily owned by other communities, the value of local wisdom is very strongly attached to the community and these values have been through a long enough road along with the community's journey.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the *Marsialapari* tradition embodies strong socio-cultural and cooperative values that remain deeply rooted in the life of the Mandailing community as an ancestral heritage. These values are clearly reflected in collective agricultural activities, particularly during *mayuan eme* (rice planting), where cooperation among community members serves to reduce workload and accelerate farming processes. The gender-based division of labor men performing *mordang* (making holes in the soil) and women carrying out *manyame* (planting rice seeds) represents an organized and harmonious form of mutual cooperation that strengthens togetherness, unity, and social cohesion within the community. Furthermore, the study finds that the spirit of *gotong royong* in *Marsialapari* extends beyond agricultural activities and is structurally reinforced through customary communication practices such as *markobar*, which are conducted sequentially based on the *Daliban Na Tolu* system. Each kinship group *subut*, *anak boru*, *mora*, and *batobangon* has a defined role in maintaining balance, respect, and affection (*holong*) in social relations. The findings indicate that the neglect of these customary roles may lead to social tension or internal conflict, demonstrating the continued relevance of customary law (*adat*) in maintaining social harmony.

In relation to the research objectives, this study shows that *Marsialapari* is not only an agricultural cooperation system but also a socio-cultural institution that regulates communication, social structure, and collective responsibility within the community. The novelty of this study lies in the finding that cultural and religious values in the Mandailing community do not exist in opposition, but rather function in a complementary and reinforcing relationship. The data suggest that adat practices are strengthened by religious values, and that tensions arise not from value contradictions, but from changes in social practices influenced by modernization, economic efficiency demands, and generational shifts. The implications of this study highlight the importance of preserving *Marsialapari* and related customary practices as living social institutions that sustain solidarity, mutual responsibility, and cultural identity. Preservation efforts should adopt adaptive strategies that respond to contemporary socio-economic changes, particularly among younger generations, without undermining the

core values of cooperation and togetherness. Therefore, *Marsialapari* should be understood not merely as a traditional agricultural practice, but as a dynamic socio-cultural mechanism that continues to strengthen community resilience in the context of modernization.

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