

GOTILON FEAST AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: ACTUALIZATION AND INCULTURATION AT THE ONAN BARU RESORTS CHURCH, SAMOSIR, NORTH SUMATERA**Priska Natalia Silaban,¹⁾ * Elvri Teresia Simbolon,²⁾ Harisan Boni Firmando,³⁾ Rusmauli Simbolon,⁴⁾ Roida Lumbantobing⁵⁾**^{1,2,3,4,5}Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia*Corresponding Author: priskanatalia11@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to examine how social identity is actualized during the Gotilon Feast at the HKBP Onan Baru Resort Church in Samosir Regency, North Sumatera. Gotilon Feast is understood as a space of inculturation that combines Batak Toba culture and Christian values, serving as a medium of expressing the cultural, personal, and communal identity of the Batak Toba-Protestant Christian congregation. The research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, collecting data through interviews, and documentation, analyzed using social identity theory, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory, and Habermas's public sphere. The results show that the celebration reflects strong symbolic practices such as the use of *ulos*, *tortor*, Batak music (*gondang*), and the giving of *silua*. In addition to being a Thanksgiving ritual, the celebration also reveals social dynamics, including a shift in meaning toward a symbol of prestige and social status. The study also found generational differences in perception and variation in practice between rural and urban churches. Through the lenses of social identity theory, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and Habermas' public sphere theory, the Gotilon Festival is seen as a cultural-religious event that constructs social identity through the intersection of faith and tradition. Thus, the celebration serves as both a religious practice and a public space where cultural and spiritual negotiations occur.

Keywords: Social identity, Gotilon Festival, Inculturation, Batak Toba Culture, Church**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis aktualisasi identitas sosial dalam perayaan Pesta Gotilon di Gereja HKBP Ressort Onan Baru, Kabupaten Samosir, Sumatera Utara. Pesta Gotilon dipahami sebagai ruang inkulturasi yang mempertemukan budaya Batak Toba dan nilai-nilai kekristenan, serta menjadi sarana ekspresi identitas budaya, diri, dan komunitas jemaat Batak Toba-Kristen Protestan. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif-deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi, dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori identitas sosial, teori habitus Pierre Bourdieu, dan ruang publik Habermas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pesta Gotilon menampilkan praktik simbolik yang kuat seperti penggunaan ulos, tortor, gondang Batak, dan pemberian silua. Selain menjadi bentuk ibadah syukur, perayaan ini juga memperlihatkan dinamika sosial berupa pergeseran makna menjadi ajang prestise dan simbol status sosial. Temuan juga menunjukkan adanya perbedaan persepsi antar generasi serta variasi makna antara gereja di wilayah rural dan urban. Dalam perspektif teori identitas sosial, teori habitus Pierre Bourdieu, dan ruang publik Habermas, perayaan ini merupakan wujud dari perjumpaan nilai budaya dan iman yang saling mempengaruhi dalam membentuk identitas sosial jemaat. Pesta Gotilon dengan demikian dapat dipahami sebagai praktik keagamaan sekaligus ruang publik tempat negosiasi budaya dan spiritualitas berlangsung.

Kata Kunci: Identitas sosial, Pesta Gotilon, Inkulturasi, Budaya Batak Toba, Gereja

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, religious, and local cultural diversity. Currently, six religions are legally recognized by the state: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and many local beliefs. In general, Islam is the majority religion, yet religious life continues harmoniously and peacefully (Hefner, 2001; Ichwan, et.al. 2022; Jubba, 2022). This is a key asset for the nation's future and is crucial to maintain. As a pluralistic and multicultural nation, religion and culture cannot be separated from one another. Many religious rituals are practically implemented in religious life, so that religious and cultural spaces form an identity that is distinct from other regions. Not only tolerance in public aspects but also in private aspects such as the distribution of inheritance between different religions and interfaith marriages, this happens in Indonesia (Seo, 2013; Zubair, et.al. 2022; Aditya, et.al. 2023).

Religion and culture are two entities that influence each other. For example, according to Mujiburrahman (2010), the Tenggerese people of East Java experienced a dialectic, even a conversion, from Tenggerese beliefs and traditions to Islam, and were not interested in embracing or affiliating with any particular type of spiritualism called the spiritual flow/Belief Stream. Meanwhile, among the Karo Batak people, most have converted to Christianity, some still maintain their past traditions and beliefs. This socio-religious reality remains a community identity and a national treasure that must be respected and valued, as a consequence of tolerance and pluralism (Ariati & Suradi, 2022).

Another reality that emerges regarding the relationship between religion and culture is also evident across all religious communities in Indonesia, for example Islam. The tradition of *Maulid*, or commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, is celebrated with great enthusiasm, encompassing not only religious but also traditional dimensions. Food offerings, *salawat* (prayer offerings), religious musical entertainment, and various rituals demonstrate this relationship. This can be seen in the *Maudu Lompoa* celebrations in Makassar, *Maulod* in Aceh, and *Grebeg Maulid* in Yogyakarta (Nurdin, 2016; Sila, 2001; Permadi & Yantari, 2024).

Likewise, the *Tumpeng* tradition for non-Javanese Catholics in Malang, East Java, is steeped in religious and cultural values. The *Tumpeng* tradition is linked to the Eucharistic celebration for the congregation at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Purworejo. The *Tumpeng* ceremony at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Purworejo demonstrates a harmony with the Eucharistic celebration. Both emphasize the importance of gratitude, but with different focuses. *Tumpeng* focuses more on gratitude for worldly blessings, while the Eucharist focuses on gratitude for Christ's saving work (Sukaryo, et.al. 2024).

Likewise, the *Ngaben* ceremony for Balinese Hindus is a unique cremation ritual that holds profound meaning in social and spiritual life. As part of a tradition passed down through generations, this ceremony not only serves as a final tribute to ancestors but also as a means of preserving cultural identity and values. The *Ngaben* tradition begins with the *memutru* tradition, which determines the adult ayu (a beautiful woman) and prepares the necessary infrastructure. Religiously, the *memutru* tradition serves to strengthen *sradha* and *bhakti* (a spiritual commitment), serves as a Hindu religious education, purifies, glorifies, liberates, and preserves the cultural wisdom of Balinese local genius. Likewise, it serves to internalize the values of Hindu religious education in the *memutru* tradition during the *Ngaben* ceremony, namely: theology of Godhead, social ethics, ethics of love, *yadnya* (charity), aesthetics, and the value of *prema* (highest happiness) (Budayasa, et.al. 2023).

Similarly, Buddhists experience the same thing, as in the death *slametan* tradition and funeral prayer ceremony of the Indonesian Nichiren Shoshu Buddha Dharma Council (MNSBDI) in Dukuh Gupit, Central Java. These rituals are inseparable because they are interconnected, following ancestral traditions and the existence of mixed acculturation or acculturation between ancestral beliefs and religion. Both are important to carry out so that the spirit receives prayers from the relatives left behind so that the spirit finds a better place, is free from suffering, so that it can be reborn in a happy realm and can achieve Buddhahood. Therefore, the death *slametan* ceremony and funeral prayer have a meaning that replaces religion and culture (Winarsih, et.al. 2023).

Furthermore, acculturation among Confucians, for example, takes the *Jamasan* tradition, preserved in the Banyumas temple in Central Java. The *Jamasan* tradition is linked to the revered altar of *Mbah Kuntjung*, a blend of local Javanese and Chinese cultures. The Boen Tek Bio Temple in Banyumas was once a school for the Chinese community, but is now a place of worship for Buddhists, Confucians, and Taoists. The ornaments at the Boen Tek Bio Temple in Banyumas have unique meanings and reflect the religious and cultural values and respect for ancestors and the gods of the Chinese community (Prasetyo, 2025). Similarly, the *Sembahyang Rebut* tradition, held by Confucians in Bangka Belitung, is a tradition of praying for ancestral spirits, held on the 15th day of the seventh month. The community believes that during this month, the gates to the afterlife/hell will open, and the spirits within will descend to the human world and return to their families (Angraini & Rachmad, 2024).

The social reality of religion is not only theoretical but also well applied in Indonesia so that it allows for a harmonious and peaceful life which is indeed the main key to the government's program through religious moderation, namely an attitude of mutual respect and

appreciation between religious adherents. This religious moderation is then supported by religious figures in society, such as clerics (*ulama*), priests, pastors, monks, and community leaders, including traditional leaders. Efforts are made to foster good interactions within society to achieve social harmony. The realization of this harmony is inseparable from the presence of figures who can mobilize the community to achieve that harmony (Firmando, 2021).

One manifestation of this richness is reflected in the Toba Batak people, who have a strong cultural heritage and a belief system closely linked to Christianity, particularly in the tradition of the Protestant Batak Christian Church (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan/HKBP*). In the context of the Protestant Toba Batak Christian community, culture is not only alive in traditional spaces but is also incorporated into religious practices. One example is the *Gotilon Festival celebration*, a tradition of thanksgiving for the harvest held within the HKBP Church (Sihombing & Simbolon, 2024).

The *Gotilon* Festival is not merely a harvest ritual but also a medium for actualizing the congregation's social identity. This social identity encompasses cultural identity, self-identity, and community identity as the Toba Batak people, who combine Christian values with local culture (Liliweri, 2007). Elements such as the use of ulos, Batak music, *tortor*, and *silua* (harvest offerings) demonstrate the space for cultural expression within the church liturgy. Thus, the *Gotilon* Festival serves as an arena for inculturation where religion and culture interact without losing their theological or cultural significance (Situmorang et al., 2021).

This phenomenon is important to examine further, given the shift in meaning of the *Gotilon* Festival, from a mere expression of gratitude to a means of projecting social status or a symbol of prestige. This demonstrates that social identity is not static, but is continually negotiated through religious and cultural domains. This study aims to analyze how the congregation's social identity is actualized during the *Gotilon* Feast celebration at the HKBP Church, Onan Baru Resort, Samosir Regency. Using a sociological approach to religion, this paper aims to demonstrate that religious practices can be a significant means of shaping and affirming a community's social identity.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the social, cultural, and religious meanings contained in the *Gotilon Festival celebration* at the HKBP Church of the Onan Baru Resort, as well as how the celebration represents the actualization of the social identity of the Toba Batak-Protestant Christian community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moleong, 2018). The study was analyzed

using social identity theory, Bourdieu's habitus theory (1984), and Habermas's public sphere (1989). The research location was conducted in three churches within the Onan Baru Resort, namely: HKBP Onan Baru (Pardomuan I Village), HKBP Huta Tinggi (Huta Tinggi Village), and HKBP Rianiate (Rianiate Village), all of which are located in Pangururan District, Samosir Regency.

The research informants consisted of pastors, *parhalado* (church elders), community leaders, and congregation members who were actively involved in the *Gotilon* celebrations. The informant selection technique was purposive, meaning that informants were selected based on specific criteria deemed to possess relevant information related to the research object (Sugiyono, 2014). Data collection was conducted using three primary techniques. The first technique was *in-depth interviews*. To obtain the informant's subjective perspective on the meaning and practice of the celebration. Participatory observation, which allowed researchers to directly understand the dynamics of the celebration and the social interactions of the congregation (Spradley, 2016). Documentation, including photos of activities, church archives, and written materials that supported the data interpretation process. Data were analyzed through a process of reduction, presentation, and conclusion using the interactive data analysis model from Miles & Huberman et al., (2014). Data validity was maintained through the triangulation of sources and techniques, ensuring the validity of data from various perspectives and methods (Sharp, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Social Identity in the *Gotilon* Feast

The *Gotilon* Festival at the HKBP Church, Onan Baru Resort, serves as a space for the collective expression of the Toba Batak Protestant Christian social identity. This identity is actualized in the use of *ulos*, *tortor*, *tandok*, and Batak *gondang* music in liturgical ceremonies. This demonstrates the strong cultural identity inherent in the community's religious life. Social identity theory posits that an individual's identity is shaped through their affiliation with a social group, where shared symbols, values, and practices define the group's identity (Jenkins, 2008; Liliweri, 2007). In this context, Batak culture is not merely a legacy, but a means of affirming who they are in a relationship of faith.

Gotilon party at the HKBP Onan Baru Church itself on the day of its implementation never forgets to use the symbols of Toba Batak culture, namely the use of *ulos* (*sekka-sekka*) where the women wear clothes using *ulos* as a shawl, songs in the Toba Batak language and

accompanied by Batak music, for the opening event, which begins with a procession line, greeted by dances and the congregation bringing their offerings (*silua*).

Gotilon is a representation of social interaction among religious adherents who use cultural media, in this case the informant explains that:

"The Gotilon celebration is a good opportunity to play Batak music, which is, of course, tailored to the Gotilon celebration. For example, we choose more upbeat music and songs, and we also use Batak music and songs. Its function is to remind the congregation of our rich culture." (Interview with informant Mr. St. M. Simatupang, S.Pd., 2024).

"The gotilon party at HKBP Onan Baru certainly has a deep meaning, where the entire congregation participates, so far I have never heard any complaints about the gotilon party, in fact they are all happy, this gotilon party is not only a church ritual but has cultural values, namely togetherness, helping each other for example through auctions, it has really helped the church's funds for church construction, right." (Interview with informant Sintua M. Sitanggang, 2024).

The meaning of the *Gotilon* celebration stems from the congregation's traditions during this celebration. By holding it annually, these patterns are repeated over and over again until they become ingrained in both individuals and groups. Bourdieu attributes this habit to socialization and continuous interaction, making it an integral part of the self. The sense of togetherness created during the *Gotilon* celebration arises from the congregation's familiarity with living in community through the existing sections. Regarding this matter, several informants explained that:

"The meaning of this gotilon feast is certainly obvious, namely, the value of togetherness. Besides expressing gratitude to God, there is also love among the congregation for the pastor and parahalado and vice versa; there is joy there." (Interview with informant Mrs. H. Naibaho, 2024).

"We feel proud because, even though we are Christians, we have not abandoned our Batak culture. In fact, through the church, we have come to appreciate our own culture more." (Interview with St. Maradu Simatupang, 2024).

*"The moment of the gotilon party is a beautiful, sweet, and perfect moment, we can see all the congregation rejoice, help each other for the service, through silua or auction, the congregation actually shows the spirit to give the best for the church, because there is already a shared value (*dos niroha, sada pangantusian ditongatongani ruas*), namely this gotilon party is for God and the church. The gotilon party that has been held every year indeed not only the theological value that we get but there is a theological combination with the value of *habatakhon*, namely there is a meal together, what the congregation has planted, harvested is brought to God, and we enjoy together, it is the same as *mamonamona* as is done by the Batak people in general. " (Interview with the Resort Pastor Rev. Lambok Siahaan, 2024).*

This *lunggu* connects individuals to form groups, so each *lunggu* has similarities and, at the same time, can also show differences with other groups or *lunggu*, namely the identity as a congregation of the HKBP Church of Onan Baru Resort, and another identity is being a HKBP

congregation from one of the resort fences. The most core identity is from a particular group or *lunggu*. Moreover, this identity is evident during the *Gotilon* celebration, particularly through the silhouette of the group brought in, and the way the group participates in the celebration, such as during entertainment and auction activities. Often, the *lunggu* presents songs of praise or choirs, dances, and other performances.

This actualization is also evident in the congregation's enthusiasm for participating in the preparations, from cooking together to arranging the harvest into church decorations. The values of solidarity and cooperation strengthen the congregation's internal social relations. Each symbol used in the *Gotilon* Festival is not an inanimate object, but rather a carrier of collective memory. The *gondang* evokes memories of ancestors and traditional ceremonies, the *tortor* evokes movements imbued with philosophical meaning, and the *ulos* connects the congregation to kinship networks (*dalihan na tolu*).

For the Batak people, *ulos* is not just a cloth used to warm the body; it also serves a symbolic role in all aspects of life. In various traditional ceremonies, *ulos* also serves as a symbol of identity, a form of respect, a sign of affection, a bond of unity, and a means of fostering social harmony. Along with producing high-quality *ulos*, it is also necessary to develop *ulos* kiosks into clean and comfortable spaces that showcase high-quality *ulos*, so that visitors will become customers. The Toba Batak people believe that the activity of weaving *ulos* is imbued with religious and magical qualities (Firmando, 2021). Whereas, *Dalihan na tolu* is a kinship system that serves as a guideline for behavior, and for the Batak people, it has a symbolic function in all aspects of life. The *Dalihan na tolu* kinship system is religious and magical, thus becoming a societal norm, enabling people to live in harmony. The *Dalihan na tolu* kinship system has social, religious, and symbolic functions, thus fostering social harmony (Firmando, 2021; Harahap, 2023).

When all of this is integrated into worship, what occurs is a strengthening of faith through sensory and emotional experiences that are uniquely Batak. Faith is not only understood cognitively through sermons but also experienced holistically through culture. This reinforces Liliweri's finding that shared symbols and practices are the key to forming a group identity.

Inculturation: A Space Where Cultural and Religious Habitus Meet

According to Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory, individual actions reflect the social structures and collective experiences that have shaped internal dispositions (Harker, 2009). In the *Gotilon* celebration, actions such as carrying *silua*, singing Batak songs in worship, or wearing *ulos* during liturgy are expressions of habitus that have evolved from the interaction

between Batak customs and Christian teachings. Culture and religion build harmony with each other. The synergy between Christianity and Batak culture stems from a reciprocal relationship that influences each other (Sihombing et al., 2024). As a form of inculturation or meeting space for cultural and religious habitus, the informant explained that:

"We were taught from childhood that when there is a harvest, we should be thankful. The harvest is brought to church. Before the advent of religion, thanksgiving was offered to Mulak Jadi Na Bolon, but over time, it was directed to be celebrated in church. However, the essence remains: God must be honored." (Interview with Rev. Lambok Siahaan, S.Th., 2024).

The Toba Batak people are a cultured society, possessing traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and efforts are made to preserve them. Toba Batak culture is present in the church worship process through many culturally related church activities. Tradition has a close relationship with religion that needs to be addressed through actions that involve interaction between religious life and tradition, of course, with clear criteria (Firmansyah, 2021).

The *gotilon* feast contains religious and cultural values at the same time, the informant explained;

"The annual gotilon feast certainly not only has theological value that we gain but also a theological blend with the habatakhon value, namely a shared meal, what the congregation has planted, harvested is brought to God and we enjoy together, it is the same as mamona-mona as practiced by the Batak people in general." (Interview with informant Mr. Rev. L. Siahaan, S.Th, 2024).

"If we position ourselves in the celebration of the gotilon party about Dalihan Natolu, I think that the Pastor or parhalado is positioned as Hula-Hula, the congregation as Dongan Tubu, and Naposo bulung as Boru, I see this from the actions seen in the gotilon party of the Pastor and Parhalado protecting, embracing, and praying in terms of giving blessings, fellow congregation members helping each other, helping and loving and if Naposo bulung is part of manghobasi or siloja-loja, but all of this is based on love and self-awareness." (Interview with Mr. St. M. Sitanggang, 2024).

The values of *habatakhon* emerge in the celebration of the *gotilon* party, which is not only a Batak tradition but also a Protestant Christian one. This opens up space for the actualization of identity, both culturally, personally, and socially. This analysis shows that there is no conflict between ethnic identity (Toba Batak) and religious identity (Protestant Christianity). Instead, a harmonious unification occurs. Protestant liturgy, which typically centers on the Word and the Sacraments, is given a Batak "soul" and "feel" through cultural symbols. The ulos-giving ceremony, for example, which is steeped in Batak values of love and respect, becomes a powerful medium for conveying Christian blessings and love in a cultural "language" best understood by the congregation. This aligns with the concept (Jenkins, 2008)

that identities are fluid and can enrich each other. Thus, the *Gotilon* Feast is evidence that the Christian faith does not erase cultural identity, but rather is lived and proclaimed through it.

Thus, religious practices are inextricably linked to the socio-cultural structures that shape them. The HKBP Church becomes an arena where habitus transformation occurs, where traditions are not abandoned but given new meaning through Christian faith.

Social Status and Symbolic Capital in Celebrations

Some practices, such as harvest auctions and offerings in the form of "large parcels" or "high-denomination money," have begun to be interpreted as symbols of prestige. In many cases, congregants who make larger offerings are given symbolic honors, such as being seated in the front row or being specifically mentioned by the committee.

Regarding these offerings, one informant explained:

"Sometimes people who bring much money are praised. Some even say, 'That is the rich person in our congregation.' But that is not the point." (Interview with Ms. Melva Malau, 2024).

For *silua*, social identity is part of what is called self-identity that distinguishes it from others, which is seen more in the very diverse livelihoods of the congregation, for example, a congregation member who works as a cloth entrepreneur brings cloth to be made into *silua* and then will be auctioned later from what he brought already shows that he is not a farmer or not an employee, that is what becomes his identity. Similarly, a farmer who brings rice or paddy to show that he is a farmer. For a broader scope, this can be seen from the three fences that are used researchers as research locations, namely HKBP Onan Baru, HKBP Huta Tinggi, and HKBP Rianiate.

"Ninety-five percent of the congregation at HKBP Onan Baru are non-farmers, so when celebrating the gotilon festival, only a few horns are carried by the congregation; the rest bring envelopes, suitcases, helmets, cloth, processed food, and others." (Interview with informant Mr. St. M. Sitanggang, 2024).

All congregations have personal identities. Those who, during the celebration of the Gotton feast, are seen holding up a horn are those who are farmers. However, there may be farmers who do not bring *silua* in the form of rice or paddy, but in general, a farmer is someone who, at that time, holds up a horn. And then, at the time of the auction, this is also observed: in general, farmers do not auction off the rice or paddy, but rather *silua-silua* in various forms, such as processed foods, drinks, cloth, and so on. What becomes an attachment to oneself is also reflected in one's actions.

According to Bourdieu, such actions constitute the use of symbolic capital, where material contributions are used to strengthen social positions within the community (Bourdieu, 1984). The *Gotilon* celebration, which was initially spiritual and collective, began to be contaminated by the values of capitalism and consumerism. According to Bourdieu, society is a collection of various arenas (fields), such as religion, culture, and economics, where individuals and groups compete for valued resources (capital). The church, in this context, can be viewed as a unique arena where spiritual, cultural, and social capital intersect.

The *Gotilon* Feast became one of the culminating moments in this arena, where various forms of capital were exchanged. Within the logic of the church arena, these material contributions were no longer viewed simply as alms or offerings (a purely religious habitus). However, they had become investments in acquiring symbolic capital.

***Gotilon* Feast as a Public Space**

Referring to Habermas's theory of the public sphere, the *Gotilon* Feast can be understood as a social arena where collective values are constructed and shared meaning (Habermas, 1989). During this feast, interactions occur among congregants across generations, genders, and social statuses, thereby strengthening the social bonds within the church. Cultural symbols such as *tortor* and *gondang* are not only aesthetic forms, but also serve as a means of communication across time between the older generation, who maintain traditions, and the younger generation, who are learning to recognize their identity. The *Gotilon* festival can be understood as a combination of public space (a place for discourse on faith and culture) and a social stage (a place for playing and constructing collective roles). The interaction between religious values and Batak customs is not only displayed but also subtly negotiated behind the scenes during the celebration. In this regard, an informant explained:

"Many young people today do not know the meaning of gondang or ulos. However, during Gotilon, they join in the dancing and lend a hand. There, we see that culture has not disappeared." (Interview with St. Lastiar br. Simbolon, 2024).

Thus, the *Gotilon* festival serves as a cultural bulwark, preserving local identity amidst globalization. It is not merely a religious service, but a space for encounter, negotiation, and the formation of a shared consciousness within the Toba Batak religious community. Another aspect of utilizing this celebration is to introduce oneself or a group to the public, so that one's social identity becomes more clearly visible.

"We deliberately formed this group, we gather together to maintain and become ambassadors or driving forces in this tourist village. It is hoped that through our

existence as a congregational tourism awareness group, other communities can also follow our example. We are also active in the church choir and participate in the annual Gotilon party activities. In fact, the congregation already knows us by our distinctive characteristics, which are evident in our home environment and the way we dress. For our group, Silua is synonymous with diversity, creativity, and one thing we really avoid: using plastic. As much as possible, the Silua we bring must be packaged without plastic." (Interview with informant (Mr. St. M. Simatupang, S.Pd, 2024).

Gotilon celebration reopens that space for groups to demonstrate their inherent identity. This aligns with the function of social identity for groups: the ability to demonstrate and interpret themselves in accordance with the group to which they belong, in terms of its norms, values, and even customs. It is increasingly emphasized in relation to Bourdieu's habitus about habitus which is formed through social experience, continuous interaction, thus forming similarities in this context there is an attachment to characteristics related to cleanliness, environmental awareness, this is increasingly internalized in individuals and groups and results in actions and behaviors that are in accordance with their identity, one of which is protecting the environment by not using environmentally unfriendly materials.

The actualization of group identity is also seen from *the silua* packaged in the form of *satti satti*. In addition to family *silua*, it turns out that in the celebration of the gotilon party, groups with full awareness and enthusiasm provide group *silua* that are formed in a very diverse way, such as packing it in the form of a tree or money branch, plates filled with rice and money, various types of parcels, grilled fish, arsik, *napinadar* chicken, and others. This *silua* can be called *satti-satti*. Regarding the actualization in the form of a presentation delivered by the informant, namely:

"The giving of silua from each sector or group shows the silua of togetherness, not determined by the church but by the group itself and created freely." (Interview with informant Mr. Rev. L. Siahaan, 2024).

"Like in HKBP Onan Baru, there are four sectors that will provide different silhouettes as well. Sometimes we also hear some congregations express their opinions in this manner; naturally, sector A has a large presence, as the people in it are all businessmen. However, that does not mean it is an opportunity to show off. Instead, we see the positive side: this sector provides the best for the church, where the results of this get-together will be unique to the church, namely, shared property. In my opinion, this is more about helping each other and covering for each other's strengths and weaknesses." (Interview with Mr. St. M. Sitanggang, 2024).

Silua exhibits group identity, which is evident only in the number and type of *silua* carried by the group itself. *Silua* groups that the church does not open up space for them to demonstrate the group's capabilities, which certainly require the unity of the group members themselves. As stated above, sometimes the assumption arises that the normality of *silua* in

large numbers is because those involved in the group have a background of high income, jobs dominated by entrepreneurs. *Silua* in the form of *satti-satti* exemplifies the concept of symbolic capital, as mentioned by Bourdieu. Symbolic capital is a form of power that enables individuals to gain recognition through prestige, reputation, and respect within society (Bourdieu, 1984). In the context of the *Gotilon* party, the practice of giving *silua* in large numbers by certain groups dominated by entrepreneurs shows the influence of symbolic capital. *Silua* given collectively and conspicuously becomes a means of representing group status before the church public and the wider Toba Batak community.

The perceived normality of the large number of *silua* from groups with strong economic backgrounds indicates a recognition of their social position. In other words, the large number of *silua* is not merely a form of economic capital. However, it has been converted into symbolic capital, namely honor and recognition as a dignified and empowered group within the church's social structure. Informants in this study even viewed this positively, as it not only enhances the group's image but is also seen as making a significant contribution to the church.

Intergeneration and Transformation of Cultural Meanings

One of the challenges that arises in implementing the *Gotilon* Festival is the shift in meaning perceived by older and younger generations. For the older generation, *Gotilon* is a sacred tradition that represents gratitude, tradition, and a vertical relationship with God. However, for some members of the younger generation, *Gotilon* tends to be interpreted as part of a routine church ceremony and is often considered merely a "traditional festival."

Related to Intergeneration and transformation of cultural meaning in the *gotilon* party, the informant explained:

"Many young people today participate simply because they are asked to. They no longer understand why they have to wear ulos or tortor, even though they are symbols of their heritage. However, at least they are still there, which is good." (Interview with St. Nicolas Sihotang, 2024).

What older generations describe as "sacred" risks becoming, in the sociology of religion, an "empty ritual" for younger generations—a ritual performed without a profound understanding of its meaning. The statement, "at least they are still there, that is good enough," reflects a realistic yet worrying compromise. Physical presence alone is not enough to ensure the long-term survival of a tradition. Traditions that lose their meaning will be abandoned when the generation that enforced their presence is no longer present.

The challenge articulated by St. Nicolas Sihotang represents a critical juncture. The future of traditions like the *Gotilon* Feast no longer depends solely on preserving form, but on regenerating meaning. The ultimate goal is for the younger generation to attend not just because they are asked to, but because they understand and feel that this ritual has really spiritual and social value for their own lives. In this way, the *Gotilon* Festival will transform from a mere relic of the past into a meaningful life practice for the present and future, both in their ancestral homeland and abroad.

Therefore, transforming cultural communication is not an option, but a necessity. This transformation does not mean sacrificing the essence, but rather adapting its methods and packaging to be relevant to the language, medium, and concerns of the younger generation. This demonstrates the need to transform cultural communication across generations, so that the spiritual and social values of the *Gotilon* Festival are not only passed down in form but also understood in essence.

Social Reflection and Regional Differences

It is also interesting to note that the meaning of the *Gotilon* feast in areas like Pangururan (Samosir) tends to remain strong and sacred, as the community remains agrarian and lives within strong traditional bonds. However, when compared to practices in HKBP churches in major cities (such as Medan, Bandung, or Jakarta), traditional values have begun to shift, and cultural symbols are merely decorative additions.

In agrarian societies, the *Gotilon* Festival is an integral part of the life cycle. Rituals such as *tortor* (traditional dance) and *gondang* (traditional music) are not performances for tourists, but rather symbolic means of communicating with ancestors, expressing gratitude to God Almighty for the earth's harvest, and strengthening social solidarity within clans and communities. Kinship ties (*dalihan na tolu*) remain very strong. Traditional festivals serve as a platform to reaffirm the position, rights, and obligations of each individual within the established social structure. In other words, custom is an unwritten constitution that governs daily life.

The *gotilon* feast is a reflection of social and regional differences, because it includes *gondang*, *ulos*, *tortor* and the value of *dalihan na tolu*. Because the informant explained that:

"In the city, the *Gotilon* celebration often consists of just a simple prayer service and an auction. There is no *tortor* or *gondang*. Here, we still maintain everything," (*Interview with Rev. Junita Nainggolan, S.Th., 2024*).

This comparison demonstrates that geographic context influences the power of inculturation, opening up space for further, broader research on the transformation of Batak culture in various urban and rural contexts. The comparison between Pangururan and these major cities essentially reflects the transition of Indonesian society as a whole: from a traditional agrarian society to a modern-urban one. The *Gotilon* Festival serves as a perfect case study to see how globalization, urbanization, and modernization transform not only the physical landscape but also the cultural and spiritual landscape of a community.

This distinction is not intended to conclude that one context is more "authentic" or "better" than another, but rather to understand the adaptive strategies communities employ in response to changing times. The question that arises is how to maintain the spirit and noble values (such as gratitude, togetherness, and respect for ancestors) so that they remain intact, even if their outward forms of expression must change to ensure their survival in the face of new challenges.

Throughout the journey, many changes have occurred, albeit on a smaller scale or without immediate impact. These changes emerged year after year, influenced by many factors, one of which was the emergence of diverse livelihoods among the congregation. The congregation no longer focused solely on agriculture but also expanded into various types of work. Over time, the congregation's *silhouettes* have also adapted to their work. This has not diminished the meaning of the celebration; in fact, the congregation strives to maintain it, despite the diverse silhouettes.

"Like me, I do not farm, so if I am not a farmer, why shouldn't I join *the gotilon party*? In fact, we want to continue doing it, even though our staple food is not rice, because this get-together *party* is for everyone. Although in the past, *getting a job* was for rice, but now it is very modern and there are lots of jobs." (*Interview with Mrs. M. Malau, 2024*).

This shift in the meaning of giving *silua* also often results in views that refer to the marginalized impact felt by some parties, many of whom are found in churches and even congregations that cannot respond to this celebration, resulting in an imbalance in mindset and understanding. The *Gotilon Feast* in the Batak church exemplifies how the congregation's habitus, shaped by cultural heritage, social norms, and economic structures, directs collective actions that appear uniform but conceal underlying inequality. In Bourdieu's framework, the practice of giving *silua* is not simply a voluntary act, but part of a game of symbolic capital that demands participation for social recognition. When the value of the donation becomes a benchmark for piety or loyalty, then those who cannot give will feel separated, isolated, or even without a sense of togetherness.

CONCLUSION

Research on the actualization of social identity in the *gotilon* feast celebration at the HKBP Church, Onan Baru Resort, reveals the success of the *gotilon* feast as a platform to showcase the identity inherent in oneself, the congregation, and those involved. The habitus that was born and developed through the harvest manggotil tradition, collaborated with religious teachings, and was supported by community capital. The openness of the HKBP church became a realm for producing practices in the *Gotilon* feast celebration. *The Gotilon Feast* celebration at the HKBP Church in Onan Baru Resort is a religious practice that represents the actualization of the social identity of the Toba Batak Protestant Christian community. Through cultural symbols such as ulos, tortor, and gondang, as well as social practices like silua and lelang, the congregation affirms its cultural identity, self-identity, and community within a religious framework. Research findings indicate that this practice is not simply a rite of thanksgiving, but a space for cultural and faith inculturation—a place where the Batak people's habitus transforms and takes on new forms within the church. However, there has also been a shift in meaning, particularly related to symbols of social status and consumerist pressures within the celebration. Furthermore, generational dynamics demonstrate a gap in understanding between older and younger generations. While older generations maintain spiritual and customary meanings, younger generations tend to view them as cultural ceremonies. Differences in location (rural and urban) also influence the strength and form of cultural expression in Christian worship. Thus, the *Gotilon* feast constitutes a vibrant public space, where cultural and religious values are renegotiated within the congregation. The turmoil surrounding the changing dynamics of *Gotilon* also indicates a potentially problematic shift in meaning. The collective and spiritual aspects of the spirit are sometimes overlooked in favor of symbolic demands and social pressures, leaving some members of the congregation feeling marginalized. Therefore, critical reflection is needed by the church and congregation to ensure *Gotilon* does not lose its fundamental meaning as an inclusive expression of gratitude and a means of fostering a shared faith.

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