

From Ritual to Consensus: Local Traditions as Mechanisms of Interfaith Cooperation in Toraja, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of *Rambu Solo* funeral rituals and *Tongkonan* ancestral houses in fostering interfaith harmony and social cohesion in Rembon, Tana Toraja, Indonesia. The research aims to explain how these traditions, beyond their symbolic functions, operate as practical mechanisms for conflict resolution and community solidarity in a highly plural society. This focus is crucial given Indonesia's recurring challenges in managing religious diversity, where pluralism, if not effectively governed, can lead to social tension and communal conflict. A qualitative case study design was employed, drawing on in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, and community members, complemented by participant observation and document analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover the mechanisms, values, and processes embedded in *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*. The findings reveal that *Rambu Solo* serves as a site of interfaith cooperation through collective participation in rituals, while *Tongkonan* provides a deliberative forum for consensus-building on social and religious issues. The implications suggest that Toraja traditions can serve as models for multicultural policy and practice, particularly in promoting local wisdom as instruments of peacebuilding. Adaptive strategies, including simplifying ritual obligations, integrating cultural values into education, and fostering interfaith dialogue between *adat* and religious leaders, are recommended to sustain harmony. The originality of this research lies in its demonstration that interfaith harmony emerges not only from doctrinal ideals or abstract principles but from living cultural institutions that embed pluralism into daily practices. By bridging Durkheim's concept of collective consciousness and Weber's theory of communal solidarity with empirical evidence from Toraja, this study contributes a distinctive model of sustainable pluralism rooted in indigenous traditions.

Keywords: Interfaith harmony; local wisdom; *Rambu Solo*; *Tongkonan*; Toraja.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menyelidiki peran ritual pemakaman *Rambu Solo* dan rumah leluhur *Tongkonan* dalam memelihara kerukunan antarumat beragama dan kohesi sosial di Rembon, Tana Toraja, Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan bagaimana tradisi tersebut, di luar fungsi simboliknya, beroperasi sebagai mekanisme praktis bagi resolusi konflik dan solidaritas komunitas dalam masyarakat yang sangat majemuk. Fokus ini penting mengingat tantangan berulang yang dihadapi Indonesia dalam mengelola keragaman agama, di mana pluralisme, jika tidak dikelola dengan efektif, dapat memicu ketegangan sosial dan konflik komunal. Desain studi kasus kualitatif digunakan, dengan mengandalkan wawancara mendalam bersama pemimpin adat, tokoh agama, dan anggota masyarakat, dilengkapi dengan observasi partisipatif serta analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan analisis tematik untuk mengungkap mekanisme, nilai, dan proses yang tertanam dalam tradisi *Rambu Solo* dan *Tongkonan*. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa *Rambu Solo* berfungsi sebagai arena kerja sama lintas iman melalui partisipasi kolektif dalam ritual, sementara *Tongkonan* menjadi forum musyawarah untuk membangun konsensus atas isu sosial dan keagamaan. Kedua tradisi tersebut secara bersamaan menginstitusionalisasi nilai solidaritas,

keramahan, saling menghormati, dan inklusivitas, sehingga mengubah potensi ketegangan antaragama menjadi kerangka kohesi. Implikasi dari temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Toraja dapat dijadikan model bagi kebijakan dan praktik multikultural, khususnya dalam mempromosikan kearifan lokal sebagai instrumen pembangunan perdamaian. Strategi adaptif yang direkomendasikan meliputi penyederhanaan kewajiban ritual, integrasi nilai budaya ke dalam pendidikan, dan penguatan dialog antar pemimpin agama dan adat untuk menjaga harmoni. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada demonstrasinya bahwa kerukunan antaragama tidak hanya lahir dari ideal doktrinal atau prinsip abstrak, melainkan dari institusi budaya yang hidup dan menanamkan pluralisme dalam praktik keseharian. Dengan menjembatani konsep *collective consciousness* dari Durkheim dan teori *communal solidarity* dari Weber dengan bukti empiris dari Toraja, studi ini memberikan kontribusi berupa model pluralisme berkelanjutan yang khas, berakar pada tradisi lokal.

Kata Kunci: Harmoni antaragama; kebijaksanaan lokal; *Rambu Solo*; *Tongkonan*; Toraja.

1. Introduction

Religious diversity is one of the prominent characteristics of modern society, which, on the one hand, can enrich socio-cultural life, but on the other hand also has the potential to trigger social tensions. A number of studies show that religious diversity has an ambivalent impact: in some contexts, it reduces the level of social trust (Tu, 2025), encourages social exclusion and limits civic participation (Amin, 2019), and affects health and well-being when accompanied by religious polarization (Lu & Yang, 2020). On the other hand, religious diversity can also strengthen social cohesion when managed through inclusive multicultural policies, as demonstrated by the Australian experience (Bouma, 2016; Bouma & Ling, 2007; Ezzy et al., 2020; Mansouri, Vergani, & Weng, 2024). This phenomenon is not only occurring at the global level, but is also evident in Indonesia, which constitutionally guarantees pluralism. However, various episodes of communal unrest in Indonesia's history show that religious diversity that is not managed properly has the potential to cause horizontal conflict. This condition is generally exacerbated by factors such as intolerance, weak social institutions, and political manipulation of religious identity, leading to intergroup violence (Coşgel, Miceli, & Yıldırım, 2023; Gebert, Boerner, & Chatterjee, 2011; Knippenberg, 2006; Neuberg et al., 2014; Schulte & Trinn, 2024).

In both the national and global contexts, Tana Toraja Regency in South Sulawesi presents a unique case. Demographic data shows that this region is dominated by Christians (86.3%, comprising 70.7% Protestants and 15.6% Catholics), followed by Muslims (12.1%), Hindus (1.6%), Buddhists (0.1%), and a small group of Aluk Todolo adherents (<0.1%) (Darmawan, 2024; Humas, 2014). Historically, Toraja has not been immune to religious tensions, such as resistance to Islamization and the DI/TII rebellion, which triggered violence and the burning of houses of worship in the 1950s (Joni, Limbong, & Pabia', 2023; Wahyudi, 2019). However, unlike many other regions in Indonesia, large-scale religious conflicts no longer occur in Toraja to date.

This fact shows that there are socio-cultural mechanisms that serve as buffers for social cohesion. The traditions of *Rambu Solo*, a traditional funeral ritual involving cross-community cooperation, and *Tongkonan*, an ancestral house that serves as a center for deliberation and consensus, become inclusive forums for interfaith participation. Field data shows that in every *Rambu Solo* ceremony, Christians, Muslims, and Hindus are involved together, whether in providing logistics, manpower, or social solidarity. Similarly, *Tongkonan* serves as a forum for deliberation that brings together various groups to resolve issues, ranging from land disputes to the regulation of social norms, based on the principle of consensus. These two traditions play an important role in transforming religious diversity, which has the potential to be a source of conflict, into a foundation for social cohesion and interfaith harmony in Toraja.

Literature on religious tolerance underscores the significant role of religious teachings in fostering interfaith harmony and social cohesion. For instance, Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize justice, equality, and respect for others, with historical interpretations and practices reinforcing Islam's commitment to interreligious dialogue and harmony (Alotaibi, 2021; Elius, Khan,

Bin Mohd Nor, Yusoff, & Noordin, 2019). Studies on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in public universities further support this, showing how such curricula promote moderation and tolerance, countering extremist views among students (Anwar, Fakhruddin, Faqihuddin, & Romli, 2024). Similarly, Sufi traditions, which prioritize self-purification, compassion, and peace, align with broader religious moderation and social integration efforts (Hayat, Anshori, Abas, & Arsyada, 2025). Beyond Islamic teachings, historical and anthropological studies highlight how Christian and secular religious traditions also promote tolerance through shared values of peace, respect, and mutual understanding (Matviyets, Veltri, & Rüpke, 2023). In Indonesia, various interfaith initiatives and educational programs have further emphasized the importance of tolerance in sustaining harmony within a multicultural society (Abdul Rahman & Shapie, 2023; Takdir & Sumbulah, 2024). However, despite these valuable contributions, gaps remain in the literature, particularly regarding how these religious teachings translate into real-life practices and interfaith interactions, especially in culturally diverse communities. Many studies focus on doctrinal ideals, leaving an underexplored area in understanding how religious values function in the lived experiences of people within plural societies.

The role of local wisdom and cultural values as social capital has been widely recognized for their contribution to community cohesion, sustainable development, and economic resilience. Research highlights how local wisdom fosters strong social networks and mutual cooperation, crucial for sustaining various aspects of community life. In Indonesia, for instance, the Gotong Royong culture among the Bajo community enhances social capital by promoting mutual support in house building and other community projects, thereby reducing costs and strengthening social ties (Siradjuddin, 2023). Similarly, in North Konawe, local wisdom has been instrumental in fostering successful business partnerships between farmers and palm oil companies, where trust and social networks ensure sustainability and institutional growth (Baka, Rianse, & la Zulfikar, 2024). Beyond economic development, local wisdom also supports sustainable agricultural practices, such as in Maluku, where community knowledge enables farmers to thrive despite limited resources (Pattinama & Nanere, 2021). Furthermore, local wisdom is integrated into ethnopedagogy in Indonesia, linking cultural education with community development and children's character-building (Sakti, Endraswara, & Rohman, 2024). While these studies emphasize the importance of local wisdom, there remains a gap in understanding how these cultural practices function as structured instruments for conflict resolution, particularly in the context of religious diversity and intergroup relations. This research seeks to explore how these traditional values contribute not only to social capital but also to fostering interfaith harmony in multicultural settings.

Research on local rituals and traditions highlights their significant role in fostering social cohesion and intergroup understanding, especially in pluralistic societies. These practices often serve as a bridge, facilitating dialogue and cooperation between diverse cultural and religious communities. For example, the Nyadran ritual in Getas Village, Indonesia, involves participation from various religious backgrounds, creating a platform for interfaith dialogue and reducing religious exclusivism (Prihantoro, 2025). Similarly, the Kalandar tradition in Trabzon, Turkey, preserves cultural heritage and promotes intercultural understanding, helping to integrate diverse ethnic groups over centuries (Uçankuş & Kızıllırmak, 2023). Additionally, the Manyanda tradition in West Sumatra strengthens community cohesion by reinforcing social roles and values during times of loss (Dewi et al., 2024). While these rituals demonstrate how local traditions can promote social harmony, challenges remain in ensuring their relevance and inclusivity in modern, multicultural settings. Rituals often face varying degrees of acceptance and adaptation, depending on economic conditions, individual attitudes toward diversity, and the public nature of the ritual (Arant, Larsen, & Boehnke, 2021; Astor, Martín-Sáez, Albert-Blanco, & Martínez-Cuadros, 2025). These gaps in the literature suggest the need for further exploration of how local traditions, such as *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*, function as practical instruments for conflict resolution and social integration in religiously diverse societies.

Overall, previous research demonstrates that religious teachings, local wisdom, and traditional rituals play a crucial role in promoting tolerance and strengthening social cohesion in pluralistic societies. Islamic and Christian teachings, for instance, emphasize values of justice, respect, and

tolerance that can strengthen interfaith relations (Elius et al., 2019; Matviyets et al., 2023). On the other hand, local wisdom and cultural values, such as the *Gotong Royong* in Indonesia, also support social and economic development through strong social networks (Baka et al., 2024; Siradjuddin, 2023). Local traditions like the Nyadran and Kalandar rituals illustrate how these practices can facilitate interfaith dialogue and reduce religious exclusivism (Prihantoro, 2025; Uçankuş & Kızılırmak, 2023). However, while these studies provide valuable insights into the role of religious and cultural values in fostering social harmony, a gap remains in understanding how two key traditions — *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* — function simultaneously to facilitate conflict resolution and form interfaith consensus in a highly plural society. This study aims to fill that gap by examining in depth the practical roles these traditions play in managing religious differences and building interfaith solidarity within the Toraja community.

The purpose of this study is to examine the practical roles of the *Rambu Solo* funeral rituals and *Tongkonan* ancestral houses in fostering interfaith tolerance and social cohesion within the highly diverse Toraja community. By focusing on these two key cultural practices, this research aims to explore how local traditions not only serve as symbols of cultural identity but also as structured instruments for conflict resolution and consensus-building across religious divides. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the mechanisms, values, and processes embedded in these traditions that contribute to managing religious differences, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing solidarity among Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and indigenous communities in Toraja. This research will provide valuable insights into how traditional wisdom can be effectively integrated into modern strategies for maintaining peace and harmony in plural societies, offering a model for other multicultural communities to emulate.

From the researcher's perspective, the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions are not only symbols of cultural heritage but also crucial mechanisms for managing religious diversity and fostering interfaith solidarity in Toraja. These traditions serve as structures for collective action that bind members of different religious communities through shared rituals and practices. Drawing on Emile Durkheim's concept of "collective consciousness," which he defines as "the totality of the beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forming a determinate system with a life of its own" (Durkheim, 1984), this study argues that these traditions function as binding forces that ensure social stability and cohesion across religious divides. In this context, the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* rituals promote social integration by reinforcing a collective identity that transcends individual religious affiliations, aligning with Durkheim's view that "society places itself above individual interests" (Durkheim, 1984). Furthermore, Max Weber's theory of "communal solidarity" provides another theoretical lens, emphasizing that solidarity emerges from shared cultural practices and values. Weber notes that solidarity is particularly strong in "communal relationships" based on "a sense of community shared by family members, friends, colleagues, or other social groups with an internal code of conduct" (M. Weber, 1978). This sense of belonging within the Toraja community, particularly during *Rambu Solo* ceremonies and *Tongkonan* gatherings, helps form a cohesive "we" identity, thus strengthening interfaith relations and resolving potential conflicts. Weber's analysis of solidarity also highlights how communal relationships, while fostering unity, often establish boundaries, reinforcing the need to identify and exclude "outsiders" (M. Weber, 1978). This study thus posits that these traditional practices do not merely preserve culture but actively contribute to conflict resolution and social harmony in a religiously diverse society.

2. Method

This study focuses on social and institutional practices that embody the local wisdom of the Toraja community in maintaining interfaith tolerance in Rembon Sub-district, Tana Toraja Regency. The primary cultural elements examined are *Rambu Solo* (traditional funeral ceremony) and *Tongkonan* (ancestral communal house), both of which serve as platforms for social interaction that cross religious boundaries. The unit of analysis encompasses not only tangible cultural artifacts but also collective behaviors, decision-making processes, and social dynamics among diverse religious communities in the area.

A qualitative design was employed to allow an in-depth (Moleong, 2021), holistic exploration of the phenomena within their specific cultural context. This approach was selected because it is particularly suitable for investigating complex, context-bound cultural practices. It also enables the researcher to capture the nuanced meanings and functions of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* as mechanisms for fostering tolerance in a pluralistic society (Fitriani, 2020). The case study framework supports a detailed investigation of real-life events that cannot be separated from their socio-cultural environment.

The research draws upon both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants, including traditional leaders, religious figures, interfaith community members, and local government officials. Secondary data consisted of demographic reports from Rembon Sub-district, historical accounts of Toraja society, and scholarly works on its social structure. These secondary sources provided a strong contextual foundation and were used to triangulate findings from the primary data.

Data collection involved two main techniques: in-depth interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were guided by an interview protocol to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to probe emerging themes. Participant observation was conducted between December 2021 and December 2022, involving direct engagement in community rituals and daily interfaith interactions. Document analysis was also carried out on traditional records, government archives, news releases, and relevant cultural literature to deepen the contextual understanding of Toraja's social life.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following a step-by-step process: (1) gathering data from the field; (2) organizing data into relevant thematic categories; (3) coding the data to identify emerging key themes; (4) developing narratives that link thematic findings into a coherent qualitative report; and (5) interpreting the data to uncover the social meanings and cultural functions of practices that support interfaith tolerance. This systematic process ensured that interpretations were grounded in the lived realities and cultural frameworks of the Toraja community.

3. Results

Interreligious Harmony in Toraja

The community in Rembon Sub-district, Tana Toraja Regency, lives in a plural and multireligious social environment, yet maintains harmony. According to recent data, the majority of the population adheres to Christianity, making up approximately 86.25% of the total population, with Protestants dominating at 70.66% and Catholics at 15.59%. Meanwhile, the Muslim community constitutes 12.09%, followed by Hindus at 1.56%, Buddhists at 0.09%, and a small group adhering to the traditional *Aluk Todolo* belief at 0.01%. This proportion highlights a high level of religious diversity, which could potentially lead to friction, but in reality, the community life in this area remains peaceful and harmonious (Humas, 2014).

Historically, Tana Toraja experienced tensions, especially during the DI/TII movement, which led to blockades and acts of violence. However, since that time, large-scale religious conflicts have never occurred again. The collective awareness of the community to maintain good relations, supported by cultural values and local wisdom, forms the foundation of social stability. In Rembon, strong fraternal bonds, attachment to the *Tongkonan* as a deliberation center, and the values of *Aluk Todolo* and Torajan culture that teach openness, create a social framework that facilitates peaceful interfaith interaction.

This harmony is built through a socialization process that emphasizes mutual respect and understanding from an early age. Pastor Abraham Ka'pan, explained:

The habit of tolerance in children's lives has been taught by parents from an early age. Parents always instruct their children not to leave the house when there is a Qur'an reading for Muslims, Christmas celebrations for Christians, or religious events for Hindus (Pastor Abraham Ka'pan, Personal Communication, December 27, 2022).

Such informal education makes the younger generation accustomed to respecting different religious practices. The tolerance instilled in childhood continues into adulthood, creating a generation

that is adaptive to diversity. This practice also serves as a natural social control that keeps interfaith interactions positive.

Interfaith harmony is also strengthened by the reciprocal adaptation mechanism between local ethnic groups and migrants. Immigrant groups such as Javanese, Balinese, Bugis, Muna, and Papua respect Torajan customs and culture, participating in local activities like *Rambu Solo*, traditional festivals, and community events. Conversely, the Torajan community also actively participates in events organized by immigrant communities. Jhon Alik, the Secretary of Rembon Sub-district, emphasized:

Immigrant ethnic groups greatly respect the local culture and customs, and vice versa. The local community is very open to immigrant ethnic groups and values their customs, culture, and beliefs. Through mutual respect between the locals and immigrant groups, it eliminates sensitivity to different religious values (Jhon Alik, Personal Communication December 22, 2021).

Although social life is marked by diversity, small frictions or misunderstandings may still occur. However, the conflict resolution pattern in Toraja highlights the role of *Tongkonan* as a deliberative forum. One example is an administrative incident regarding land certificates, which raised concerns about the demolition of a mosque. Siti Aminah shared:

The information circulating in the community became heated due to the planned demolition of the mosque on that land, which made the Muslim community angry and gather. However, the local government, including traditional and religious leaders, responded quickly and wisely (Siti Aminah, Personal Communication, January 3, 2022).

The sub-district government, together with traditional leaders and religious figures, immediately held a meeting at the *Tongkonan*, involving all parties to find a solution. According to Jhon Alik:

When the mosque demolition conflict occurred, the Muslim residents immediately approached the sub-district government to resolve their issues. Then, the government organized a meeting to resolve the issues together (Jhon Alik, Personal Communication, January 8, 2022).

This resolution pattern demonstrates the high public trust in local authorities and the role of traditional leaders in maintaining social balance. The deliberation not only functions as an administrative instrument but also as a manifestation of local democracy, social justice, and interfaith solidarity.

Awareness of differences is also manifested in the regulation of social norms to avoid friction. For example, the regulation of livestock management. In an interview on January 10, 2022, Rosa Minggu explained that Christian and Hindu communities are asked to build pens for pigs and dogs so they do not disturb the land and crops of other residents. For Muslims, these two animals hold religious significance—its meat is haram to consume, and the saliva of a dog is considered impure. This deliberation resulted in a rule that was accepted by all parties, reflecting the values of social responsibility and respect for different beliefs.

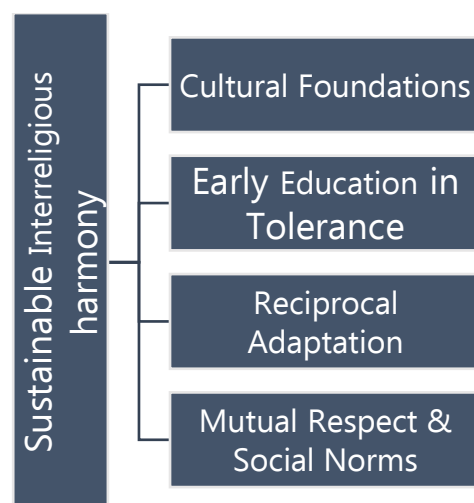


Figure 1. Model of Harmony in Toraja Society

Figure 1 illustrates the model of sustainable interfaith harmony in Toraja, which is built upon four mutually reinforcing elements. Cultural Foundation—realized through traditions such as *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*—provides an inclusive space that facilitates interfaith interactions. Early Education in Tolerance instills values of respect and acceptance from an early age through family and community socialization. Reciprocal Adaptation reflects the mutual adjustment made by local ethnic groups and migrants to accommodate each other's customs and beliefs. Finally, Mutual Respect & Social Norms ensure that daily interactions are guided by common rules and consideration for religious sensitivities. Together, these elements create a framework that is embedded in the culture and supported socially, maintaining long-term harmony in a multireligious society.

Thus, interfaith harmony in Toraja, particularly in Rembon Sub-district, is the result of historically, socially, and culturally maintained interactions. Despite having a high level of religious diversity and having experienced tensions in the past, the local community has managed to establish a stable and sustainable way of coexistence. This has been made possible by four main pillars: a cultural foundation rooted in the traditions of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* as inclusive spaces for interaction; early tolerance education that instills mutual respect; reciprocal adaptation between local ethnic groups and migrants; and the application of social norms and deliberation mechanisms to manage differences and resolve conflicts. These four elements mutually reinforce each other, forming a model of harmony that not only prevents conflict but also enriches social life in a multireligious society. This finding emphasizes that local wisdom and Toraja cultural values serve as important social capital that can be replicated in the context of religious pluralism in other regions.

Mechanisms, Values, and Processes in the Traditions of Rambu Solo and Tongkonan

In the interfaith harmony model described in Figure 1, the cultural foundation aspect is realized through traditions such as *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*. These traditions specifically play a crucial role in Rembon, Tana Toraja, guiding peaceful coexistence among diverse religious communities. *Rambu Solo* is a traditional funeral ceremony in Toraja, serving as the final homage to the deceased and a means of guiding their soul to *Puya* (the afterlife) to join their ancestors. This tradition is not merely a funeral ritual but a cultural event rich in symbolic meaning and social values. In Torajan cosmology, death is viewed as a transition that is equally important as life, making the ceremony both spiritually and socially significant.

The elements of the ceremony include preparations made well in advance, the sacrifice of animals (particularly buffaloes and pigs), artistic performances such as *Ma'badong* dances, the procession of the deceased to their final resting place (in caves, rocky cliffs, or special tombs), and the placement of *Tau-tau* statues as symbols of the spirit that continues to watch over the family (Rachman, 2024).



Figure 2. Implementation of *Rambu Solo* Tradition in Rembon

Source: Personal documentation, 2024.

The implementation of the *Rambu Solo* tradition in Rembon is vividly illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the collective effort of family members, relatives, neighbors, and the wider community in carrying out the funeral ceremony. The scene demonstrates how the ritual is not only a spiritual event but also a social gathering that reinforces cooperation and inclusivity. The carrying of the coffin to the Tongkonan, the presence of traditional leaders guiding the ritual, and the participation of people from diverse religious backgrounds highlight the embedded values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), respect for religious differences, and *karapasan* (hospitality). As seen in Figure 2, the *Rambu Solo* ritual creates a shared social space that bridges interfaith relations, where Christians, Muslims, and Hindus come together to contribute—whether through logistics, financial support, or symbolic presence. This inclusive practice ensures that the *Rambu Solo* tradition continues to serve as both a cultural identity marker and a living mechanism of interfaith harmony.

The implementation of *Rambu Solo* unfolds in a series of stages involving many parties. The preparation stage begins with planning and gathering resources, which is often done years in advance, including saving for the costs of the ceremony and preparing the sacrificial animals. The execution stage includes animal sacrifices, the provision of food for guests, traditional art performances, and the procession of the deceased to their final resting place. This entire sequence is carried out through a structured collaborative mechanism: the nuclear family leads the preparation, relatives and neighbors assist with logistics, traditional leaders guide the ritual process, and religious leaders lead prayers according to their respective beliefs (Bigalke, 2006). The interactions during this process create a space for intense social engagement, where all parties—both inside and outside the community—can actively participate. This social process not only strengthens internal solidarity within the Toraja community but also builds a bridge for interfaith communication through shared cooperative experiences.

In addition to *Rambu Solo*, there is also the *Tongkonan* tradition. *Tongkonan* is the traditional house of the Toraja people, which holds both sacred and vital social functions within the community. The word *Tongkonan* comes from *tongkon*, meaning "to sit," reflecting its function as a place for gathering, discussing, and making important decisions within both the extended family and the community (Wahyuddin, 2022). More than just a dwelling, *Tongkonan* serves as the center of social, cultural, and spiritual life for the Toraja people, symbolizing kinship that is passed down through generations within specific clans. Its connection with the ancestors makes *Tongkonan* a spiritual bridge, a place where people interact, seek protection, and strengthen their cultural identity (Waterson, 2013). Several related rituals, such as *Mangrara Banua* (thanksgiving after the construction of the house), *Makarenreng* (ritual on the first day of construction), *Ma'ta'da* (ritual on the second day), *Ma'tarampak* (preparation check before the peak ceremony), *Tuma'Topoda/Allona* (the ritual marking the completion of the house), and *Ma'bubung* (the closing ritual), are performed in connection with *Tongkonan*. Its distinctive architecture

includes a raised rectangular house with a curved roof resembling a boat or buffalo horns, decorated with buffalo horns to indicate the family's social status. The materials used, such as *ulin* wood, bamboo, and *ijuk* fibers, reflect local wisdom in utilizing natural resources.



Figure 3. Portrait of the *Tongkonan* House with Social Cohesion Values in the Rembon Community, Tana Toraja

Source: Personal documentation, 2024.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the *Tongkonan* house stands not only as an architectural symbol of Toraja culture but also as a living institution that embodies social cohesion values within the Rembon community. Its towering curved roof and sacred design reflect the ancestral connections and communal solidarity of the Toraja people. The rituals associated with *Tongkonan*—such as *Mangrara Banua*, *Makarenreng*, *Ma'ta'da*, and *Tuma'Topoda*—involve the participation of extended families, religious figures, and neighbors, reinforcing values of solidarity, deliberation, and mutual respect across religious and ethnic boundaries.

The *Tongkonan* tradition embodies social values that strengthen cohesion and tolerance among community members. The value of solidarity is evident in the involvement of the entire family lineage, including members living outside the region, in collectively financing and preparing the ceremony. *Musyawarah* (deliberation) is a core principle in every decision-making process, whether it involves construction, renovation, or ritual performance. The value of respect for differing religious beliefs also emerges, as ceremonies at *Tongkonan* often invite relatives and neighbors from various religious backgrounds to participate, assist, or simply be present as a form of respect. This tradition teaches the importance of maintaining good relationships, mutual respect, and cooperation for the common good, transcending religious and ethnic boundaries.

The execution of the *Tongkonan* ritual involves a series of stages that include cross-role collaboration. The initial stage, *Makarenreng*, involves offering chicken and offerings to the ancestors on the first day of construction. The second day is followed by *Ma'ta'da*, offering pigs and offerings to the gods. *Ma'tarampak* serves as the final preparation before the peak ceremony, including the gathering of sacrificial animals. The peak ritual, *Tuma'Topoda/Allona*, marks the establishment of the traditional house, attended by the extended family, traditional leaders, religious figures, and surrounding community members. Afterward, *Ma'bubung*, the closing ritual, is carried out with offerings of pigs and

the planting of sandalwood trees as a symbol of sustainability (D. Roth, 2006). At each stage, there is a clear division of roles: traditional leaders guide the ceremonies, the extended family provides logistics and funding, while the surrounding community offers physical and moral assistance. This process serves to strengthen kinship bonds, build trust, and maintain social integration, where the values of mutual cooperation, openness, and respect for differences continue to be passed down across generations (Adams, 2015).

Both of these traditions, which are consistently practiced in Rembon Sub-district, Tana Toraja, form a social framework that strengthens interfaith tolerance through practical interactions in daily life. *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* not only serve as cultural preservation tools but also as mediums for interfaith interaction that foster trust, solidarity, and respect. The spirit of tolerance in the community is rooted in two main pillars. First, the spirit of cooperation and solidarity, clearly visible in the collective participation in the traditional ceremonies, especially *Rambu Solo*, which involves Christians, Muslims, and Hindus in social and ritual activities without compromising their respective identities. Second, the harmony established in aspects of faith and worship, where each religious community ensures peace and security during the rituals of others. As stated by Seri Salunna, this reflects a social awareness that transcends religious boundaries:

Although we have different beliefs, when someone is sick or passes away among us, we visit each other, whether Muslim, Christian, or Hindu, including in the *Rambu Solo* tradition (Seri Salunna, Personal Communication, January 13, 2022).

This principle of mutual respect is also manifested in the habit of maintaining peace during religious services. Syamsul Baso stated that when hearing another religion perform its worship or sing praise songs to their God, Muslims try to maintain peace by avoiding making noise (Syamsul Baso, Personal Communication, January 6, 2022). This attitude demonstrates that harmony is not only articulated verbally but also implemented in concrete actions that protect the spiritual space of each religion. Inclusive cooperation is also evident in interfaith social events, such as weddings, where Christian families entrust Muslim cooks to ensure that the food served to Muslim guests is halal. Pastor Bertha Sorrean emphasized that the goal is to avoid negative perceptions and ensure that the food consumed by Muslims complies with Islamic law (Pastor Bertha Sorrean, Personal Communication, January 8, 2022).

In addition to interfaith involvement in *Rambu Solo*, the community in Rembon Sub-district also shows equal participation in the *Tongkonan* tradition. Although *Tongkonan* is not a religious activity but rather a customary tradition related to ancestral homes and kinship ties, its execution involves the entire community, regardless of religion. Mutual cooperation is at the core of every stage of the activity, from the preparation of the construction or renovation of the traditional house, the provision of building materials, to the execution of the thanksgiving ceremony. People from Christian, Muslim, and Hindu backgrounds together contribute their labor, time, and even food to support the success of the event. This not only strengthens kinship relationships within a particular clan but also broadens social networks across religions. As expressed by Yohanis Banne, a local customary leader,

When there is a *Tongkonan* event, everyone will come to help. It doesn't matter whether you are Christian or Muslim, the important thing is that we are all part of the big family here (Yohanis Banne, Personal Communication, January 12, 2022).

The mutual cooperation in *Tongkonan* creates an egalitarian social interaction space and strengthens the sense of shared ownership of cultural heritage. Despite differing religious backgrounds, all parties participate in the division of tasks, from physical work such as constructing the house structure to assisting with logistics and food. The presence of people from different religious communities at this event is a tangible proof that the values of togetherness in *Rembon* go beyond religious beliefs. In the atmosphere of working together, there is an exchange of experiences, informal dialogue, and mutual acquaintance that further strengthens trust and tolerance. The collective awareness of preserving *Tongkonan* as a symbol of unity has become an essential social capital in maintaining harmony and preventing potential conflicts in a multireligious society.

Interfaith involvement in various customary and social activities builds strong social capital in the form of trust and a sense of security between communities. These practices confirm that tolerance in Toraja is active, participatory, and integrated into the rhythm of community life. Local culture, particularly *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*, serves as a neutral space that facilitates egalitarian interactions, forms habits of living together, and acts as an effective conflict prevention mechanism. Thus, local wisdom not only functions as an identity marker but also as a strategic instrument in creating and maintaining sustainable social harmony amidst religious diversity.

Contributions of Rambu Solo and Tongkonan to Harmony and Conflict Prevention

The cultural foundation aspect described in Figure 1 is realized through traditions such as *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*, which are the main pillars supporting peaceful and harmonious life in Rembon Sub-district, Tana Toraja. These traditions not only serve as markers of cultural identity but also as neutral spaces facilitating interfaith interactions in an egalitarian environment. Through the values embedded in these traditions, such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and respect for ancestors, the community builds a social system that encourages harmonious interactions and prevents friction. These traditions internalize the collective awareness that religious differences are not obstacles but part of a shared life that must be nurtured.

Rambu Solo, as a traditional funeral ceremony, has a social impact that far exceeds its function as a death ritual. The entire process, from preparation to execution, involves interfaith participation. Christians, Muslims, and Hindus work together to prepare the venue, slaughter sacrificial animals, prepare food, and organize the procession. This process creates an intense interaction space that strengthens social bonds and fosters a shared sense of ownership over Torajan culture. As stated by Seri Salunna,

Although we have different beliefs, when someone is sick or passes away among us, we visit each other, whether Muslim, Christian, or Hindu, including in the *Rambu Solo* tradition (Seri Salunna Personal Communication, January 13, 2022).

In addition to *Rambu Solo*, *Tongkonan* plays a significant role as a community gathering center. Its function is not limited to family or clan activities but extends to becoming a forum for deliberation involving all layers of society, regardless of religion. When potential conflicts arise, such as land disputes or differences in livestock practices, *Tongkonan* becomes a safe space to seek solutions together. This aligns with the view of Yohanis Banne, a local customary leader, who stated,

“When there is a *Tongkonan* event, everyone will come to help. It doesn’t matter whether you are Christian or Muslim, the important thing is that we are all part of the big family here” (Yohanis Banne, Personal Communication, January 12, 2022).

Both of these traditions directly contribute to conflict prevention. The principle of *mufakat* (consensus) that forms the basis for decision-making in *Tongkonan* ensures that all parties feel heard and valued. This is evident when an issue arose concerning the demolition of a mosque in Rembon, where local government, traditional leaders, and religious figures held a meeting in *Tongkonan* to reach a peaceful resolution. This process not only resolves issues effectively but also strengthens trust between communities. The awareness that all problems can be resolved through dialogue and cooperation becomes essential social capital for sustaining harmony.

The values of brotherhood and respect for other religions embedded in both traditions are reflected in various social practices. For example, during *Idul Adha*, Muslims in Rembon share sacrificial meat not only with fellow Muslims but also with Christians and Hindus. Tori, a Hindu religious leader, mentioned that the sacrificial meat is distributed to everyone, regardless of religion, which makes us feel like one family (Tori, Personal Communication, December 23, 2021). Similarly, during *Christmas*, Christian families invite their Muslim and Hindu neighbors, even ensuring that the food served is halal by involving Muslim cooks in the preparation.

Interfaith interactions in the implementation of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* encourage the development of high social awareness. The community naturally adapts to the norms of other religions,

such as building enclosures for dogs and pigs to respect the sensitivities of Muslims. This mutual respect not only maintains social order but also enriches the experience of living together. As stated by Syamsul Baso,

“When we hear another religion worship or sing praise songs to their God, we strive to maintain peace by not causing disturbances” (Syamsul Baso, Personal Communication, January 6, 2022).

From various practices derived from *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*, it is clear that both serve as effective cultural instruments in building and maintaining interfaith harmony in Rembon, Tana Toraja. These traditions create an inclusive meeting space, facilitate open communication, and foster mutual trust. The values of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and respect embedded in both traditions form a social barrier that can prevent conflicts and strengthen solidarity. The harmony model that emerges is not an instant construct, but the result of social practices that continue to be nurtured across generations, offering inspiration for other multicultural communities in Indonesia.

Table 1. Contributions of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* to Interfaith Harmony in Rembon, Tana Toraja

Contribution Aspect	Role of <i>Rambu Solo</i>	Role of <i>Tongkonan</i>
Strengthening Solidarity	Bringing together Christians, Muslims, and Hindus in the preparation and execution of the ceremony; mutual cooperation strengthens social bonds	Facilitating cooperation in the construction or renovation of ancestral houses with involvement from all parties
Forum for Consensus and Deliberation	Serving as a meeting point for extended families and the community to discuss important issues informally	Serving as an official deliberation center involving traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members
Conflict Prevention	Creating harmonious relationships that reduce the potential for conflict through regular interfaith interaction	Serving as a space for resolving issues, such as land disputes, through consensus
Interfaith Celebrations and Sharing	Inviting all communities to attend and contribute, creating a sense of shared ownership	Opening opportunities for all religions to participate in family/clan traditional celebrations
Social Adaptation	Encouraging the community to understand and respect the religious practices of others	Ensuring all customary rules are mutually agreed upon to maintain harmony
Enhancing Collective Awareness	Fostering awareness of the importance of living peacefully together	Strengthening the values of unity and a sense of shared responsibility

Table 1 demonstrates how *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* play a crucial role as pillars of harmony amidst religious diversity in Rembon, Tana Toraja. These two traditions not only serve as symbols of cultural preservation but also as inclusive spaces that facilitate mutual cooperation, deliberation, and interfaith interactions. Through practices such as sharing, cooperation in traditional ceremonies, and conflict resolution mechanisms based on consensus, *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* represent a tangible reflection of a harmonious and peaceful life that is sustainably maintained in a multireligious society.

Thus, the findings of sub-theme 3 confirm that *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* are not merely cultural heritage but serve as effective social instruments in building, maintaining, and strengthening interfaith harmony in Rembon, Tana Toraja. These traditions facilitate interfaith interactions in various forms—from mutual cooperation, participation in traditional ceremonies, deliberation for conflict resolution, to practices of sharing and celebrating together—all rooted in the values of local wisdom. Through inclusive, participatory, and consensus-oriented mechanisms, *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* not only prevent potential social friction but also build mutual trust, solidarity, and respect for differences, thereby creating lasting harmony in a multicultural society.

4. Discussion

The research reveals that the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions play a vital role in maintaining interfaith harmony within the pluralistic society of Rembon, Tana Toraja. These traditions, which involve shared participation from Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and local ethnic groups, function as effective tools for fostering social cohesion and conflict prevention. The interfaith interactions that occur during the *Rambu Solo* funeral ceremonies and the *Tongkonan* deliberative processes reflect a deep cultural foundation rooted in mutual cooperation, respect, and deliberation. The community's long-standing tradition of inclusion and respect for differing religious practices has led to the formation of a social framework that promotes peace and reduces interreligious tensions. Importantly, these practices instill values of solidarity from an early age, further embedding tolerance into the fabric of the community.

Building on these findings, it can be argued that the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions serve as integral mechanisms for social cohesion and conflict prevention in the pluralistic society of Toraja. From the researcher's perspective, these traditions are not simply cultural practices, but powerful forces that help bind individuals across different religious communities. This argument is supported by Emile Durkheim's concept of "collective consciousness," which he defines as "the totality of the beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forming a determinate system with a life of its own" (Durkheim, 1984). According to Durkheim, collective consciousness acts as a unifying force that transcends individual interests and ensures the stability of society. In the case of Toraja, the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* rituals foster a collective identity that integrates people from various religious backgrounds, creating a shared sense of belonging. This sense of unity aligns with Durkheim's assertion that "society places itself above individual interests" (Durkheim, 1984), as the practices within these traditions promote mutual cooperation, respect, and social harmony, reinforcing the collective good over individual religious or ethnic identities. Through their continued practice, these traditions help prevent interfaith tensions and establish a framework of solidarity, enabling different religious communities to coexist peacefully.

From the perspective of Max Weber, the concept of "communal solidarity" further enhances the understanding of interfaith harmony in Toraja. Weber's theory posits that solidarity arises from shared cultural practices and values, particularly in "communal relationships," which are based on a deep sense of community among family members, friends, colleagues, or other social groups. These relationships, Weber argues, are governed by an internal code of conduct that fosters a strong bond within the group (Max Weber, 1978). In the case of the Toraja community, the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions create such communal relationships, where participation in these rituals generates a sense of collective belonging. This shared sense of "we," particularly during the *Rambu Solo* funeral ceremonies and *Tongkonan* gatherings, strengthens interfaith ties by integrating people from various religious backgrounds into a cohesive social unit. However, Weber also emphasizes that communal solidarity, while promoting unity, often establishes boundaries that differentiate "insiders" from "outsiders." This boundary formation is crucial for defining the group's identity and reinforcing solidarity within the group. In the context of Toraja, these boundaries are not exclusionary but serve to protect and strengthen the internal cohesion of the community, allowing for peaceful coexistence while respecting religious differences. The ability of these traditions to maintain a strong collective identity while

simultaneously fostering cooperation among different religious groups reflects Weber's notion of communal solidarity, where a shared identity is built through both inclusion and differentiation.

While previous scholarship on religious tolerance has predominantly focused on doctrinal teachings and institutional frameworks—such as Islamic principles of justice and equality (Alotaibi, 2021; Elius et al., 2019), the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping moderation (Anwar et al., 2024), Sufi traditions of compassion and peace (Hayat et al., 2025), and Christian or secular traditions emphasizing respect and mutual understanding (Matviyets et al., 2023)—these studies often remain within the normative and prescriptive domain. They highlight the ideals of tolerance but provide limited insight into how such principles are operationalized in everyday interfaith encounters. By contrast, the findings on *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* demonstrate the lived enactment of tolerance through deeply rooted cultural practices that integrate religious diversity into social rituals. This emphasis on embodied traditions not only complements doctrinal perspectives but also addresses a gap in the literature by showing how interfaith harmony is sustained through collective practices rather than solely through formal teachings or programs (Abdul Rahman & Shapie, 2023; Takdir & Sumbulah, 2024). In this regard, the Toraja case advances the discourse by bridging the divide between normative ideals and practical realities, offering a more grounded understanding of how plural societies can cultivate lasting cohesion.

In line with broader research on local wisdom, the findings on *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* also affirm the crucial role of indigenous traditions in sustaining social cohesion and community resilience. Prior studies show how *Gotong Royong* among the Bajo community strengthens social capital through cooperative practices (Siradjuddin, 2023), how trust-based local wisdom in North Konawe fosters sustainable partnerships between farmers and palm oil companies (Baka et al., 2024), and how cultural knowledge in Maluku supports adaptive agricultural practices under resource limitations (Pattinama & Nanere, 2021). Likewise, the integration of local wisdom into ethnopedagogy underscores its importance for education and character formation (Sakti et al., 2024). Compared with these contexts, the Toraja case contributes a distinctive dimension by demonstrating how local wisdom is not only tied to economic or educational outcomes but also to interfaith harmony, where cultural rituals serve as enduring mechanisms for bridging religious differences. This suggests that Toraja traditions expand the scope of local wisdom studies by showing its capacity to mediate religious diversity and reinforce solidarity in plural societies.

Comparable to studies on local rituals that foster intergroup understanding, the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions in Toraja similarly function as cultural platforms for dialogue and cooperation across religious boundaries. Prior research demonstrates that the Nyadran ritual in Getas Village facilitates interfaith dialogue and reduces exclusivism through shared participation (Prihantoro, 2025), while the Kalandar tradition in Trabzon sustains intercultural understanding across ethnic lines (Uçankuş & Kızıllırmak, 2023). Likewise, the Manyanda tradition in West Sumatera reinforces social roles and communal solidarity during periods of loss (Dewi et al., 2024). These parallels underscore the broader capacity of rituals to mediate diversity and strengthen social cohesion. However, what distinguishes the Toraja context is the way in which *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* rituals have institutionalized inclusivity across multiple religions, embedding interfaith cooperation into the very fabric of community life. While earlier studies note the challenges of ritual adaptation to modern, multicultural realities (Arant et al., 2021; Astor et al., 2025), the Toraja case illustrates a particularly resilient model where traditions continue to evolve yet remain widely accepted, thus offering a more sustainable framework for interfaith harmony in pluralistic societies.

The novelty of this research lies in its demonstration that interfaith harmony in Toraja is not merely the result of doctrinal teachings, local wisdom, or ritual practices viewed in isolation, but emerges from the dynamic integration of cultural traditions that institutionalize inclusivity across religious boundaries. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on normative ideals, economic cooperation, or the symbolic dimensions of rituals, this study shows how *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* have become living institutions that embed values of solidarity, mutual respect, and cooperation into the everyday life of a plural community. By revealing how these traditions simultaneously preserve cultural identity

and adapt to contemporary interfaith realities, the research highlights a distinctive model of sustainable pluralism that goes beyond theoretical or programmatic approaches. This contribution advances the discourse on religious tolerance by offering a concrete case where cultural rituals serve as enduring, practical mechanisms for preventing conflict and nurturing long-term social cohesion.

This research carries important interpretations that extend beyond the empirical findings, offering broader insights into the social, historical, and ideological significance of the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions. The social meaning of this study's findings lies in how the traditions of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* demonstrate that interfaith harmony in Toraja is not merely rhetorical but is continuously practiced through shared cultural rituals that generate solidarity and trust across religious boundaries. Similar patterns can be observed in other contexts: the *Ngejot* tradition in North Lombok fosters cohesion among Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists by creating spaces of mutual respect through food-sharing (Jayadi, 2025), while the *perang topat* festival serves as a ritual of civic engagement that unites Sasak Muslims and Balinese Hindus despite occasional contestation from puritan groups (Suprpto, 2017). Local traditions in Nglinggi Village likewise highlight the role of social norms and effective communication in nurturing interfaith tolerance (Susanto, 2025), and the Taman Kemaliq in Lombok illustrates how shared sacred spaces can sustain interreligious harmony (Sumertha, Busro, & Yusuf Wibisono, 2025). These comparative insights affirm that cultural traditions such as *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* serve as "social infrastructure" where solidarity is learned, practiced, and institutionalized. They cultivate everyday habits of cooperation, hospitality, and mutual respect, thereby reinforcing social cohesion in multireligious societies. In this sense, the Toraja case contributes to a broader understanding of how local traditions function as living mechanisms that operationalize interfaith harmony through embodied practices rather than abstract ideals.

The historical meaning of this research lies in showing how the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions have acted as instruments of cultural resilience that enabled the Toraja community to withstand and recover from episodes of religious tension, such as resistance to Islamization and the DI/TII rebellion. Rather than allowing these conflicts to create lasting division, the community relied on ritual continuity and deliberative spaces to preserve solidarity across faith boundaries. This aligns with broader studies that define cultural resilience as the community's ability to adapt and cope with adverse conditions, often supported by religious and spiritual resources (Schwalm, Zandavalli, de Castro Filho, & Lucchetti, 2022; Yeung & Bellehumeur, 2021). Although religion can play a dual role—either exacerbating or mitigating conflict (Deitch, 2022; McBride & Richardson, 2012)—the Toraja case highlights its peacebuilding capacity, where shared traditions became buffers against escalation. Comparable findings demonstrate how resilience mediates the negative effects of religious struggles on health and well-being (Boczkowska, Skalski-Bednarz, Konaszewski, & Surzykiewicz, 2025; Konaszewski, Skalski, Niesiobędzka, & Surzykiewicz, 2023) and how religious self-regulation can foster constructive conflict management strategies (Ashraf, Zareen, & Yıldırım, 2023). In this sense, the endurance of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* illustrates how cultural practices rooted in spirituality can function as historical safeguards, embedding mechanisms of reconciliation and collective recovery that transform memories of conflict into a foundation for long-term harmony.

The ideological meaning of this research highlights how the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions function as cultural embodiments of local wisdom that actively sustain religious pluralism in Toraja. These traditions demonstrate that tolerance is not merely a theological or political discourse but a lived ideological stance rooted in communal practices. This resonates with broader findings that local wisdom mediates the relationship between religious tolerance and nonviolent attitudes in Indonesia (Syahputra & Syaltout, 2024) and that culture-based religious tolerance, as seen in Kaloran's *agama ageming aji* and *sing penting brayan*, integrates faith and culture to desacralize exclusivist tendencies (Sodiqin & Umroh, 2023). Similar principles are embedded in Tafsīr al-Bayān, which links compassion and justice to peacebuilding within local cultural frameworks (Zaman, Mawardi, & Muna, 2024). Practices such as *polong renten* in Lombok (Maretha, 2020) and *tepung tawar* in South Sumatra (Alfitri & Hambali, 2013) further show how ritualized local wisdom strengthens interreligious awareness and provides mechanisms for conflict resolution. Likewise, Bali's *Tri Hita Karana* and *Tat Twam Asi*

philosophies offer ideological foundations for mutual respect and interreligious harmony (Kiriana, Dasih, Widiasih, Supandi, & Sujana, 2024). By aligning with these patterns, the Toraja case illustrates how local traditions institutionalize inclusive values, serving as counter-narratives to exclusivism and radicalism. Ideologically, this underscores that religious pluralism in Indonesia is sustained not only through state policies or interfaith programs but also through culturally embedded worldviews that normalize cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual respect across religious boundaries.

The findings of this study highlight the constructive functions of the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions in sustaining interfaith harmony within Toraja's plural society. These traditions provide a cultural framework where solidarity, mutual respect, and deliberation are cultivated and institutionalized. Socially, they strengthen trust and cooperation across religious communities, reducing the risk of open conflict. Culturally, they serve as vehicles for transmitting values of tolerance and hospitality across generations, ensuring that inclusivity becomes part of community identity. Ideologically, they act as counter-narratives to exclusivism and radicalism, showing that local wisdom can be a powerful foundation for pluralism. These positive implications suggest that such traditions can serve as models for other multicultural contexts, offering locally grounded strategies for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

However, the study also reveals potential dysfunctions that require careful consideration. The economic burden of elaborate *Rambu Solo* rituals can create inequality, pressuring less affluent families and potentially excluding them from full participation. Socially, the binding force of *adat* may generate conformity pressures, limiting individual freedom to disengage from costly or contested practices. Religiously, tensions can emerge when traditional customs encounter resistance from more puritanical interpretations of faith. Politically, the symbolic authority of *Tongkonan* and customary leaders could be co-opted for power consolidation rather than genuine communal deliberation. These challenges underscore the need for adaptive strategies: simplifying ritual obligations to ease economic strain, integrating traditional values into formal education and policy frameworks, and fostering dialogue between religious leaders and *adat* authorities. By reflecting on both functions and dysfunctions, this study provides a balanced view of how local traditions can inspire harmony while acknowledging the complexities of sustaining them in contemporary plural societies.

However, the study also reveals potential dysfunctions that require careful consideration. Economically, elaborate ritual obligations can reproduce inequality by imposing substantial financial burdens on households—analogueous to the escalating costs documented for culturally significant practices elsewhere (e.g., the commercialization of the Lobola tradition) that strain young or less affluent families and entrench exclusion (Madondo & Dhobha, 2025); similar dynamics appear when structural inequalities and rural remoteness amplify out-of-pocket pressures on basic needs (Lonsdale & Enyedi, 2019; Ryder et al., 2024). Socially, the binding force of *adat* may generate conformity pressures that curb personal autonomy, echoing broader evidence that strong normative climates can suppress individual agency and that well-being depends on balancing freedom with constraint (Harrington, Boski, & Gelfand, 2015; Nishikawa, 2025). Religiously, tensions can surface when traditional customs meet more puritan/orthodox interpretations, a pattern observed in comparative settings where reformist rigor clashes with entrenched ritual life, yet does not always escalate if practical accommodation is maintained (Oldridge, 2018; Syafieh, Noviany, & Amin, 2018; Walsham, 2008). Politically, the symbolic authority embedded in *Tongkonan* and customary leadership risks co-optation for power consolidation, paralleling cases in which traditional offices are centralized, instrumentalized, or contested within modern governance arrangements.

5. Conclusion

This study found that the *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* traditions in Rembon Sub-district, Tana Toraja, play a crucial role in maintaining interfaith harmony through four main pillars: a cultural foundation that facilitates interfaith interaction, early tolerance education, reciprocal adaptation between local ethnic groups and migrants, and the implementation of social norms and deliberation mechanisms to resolve differences. These two traditions function not only as cultural symbols but also

as effective social instruments in building solidarity, strengthening social cohesion, and preventing interfaith conflicts. By involving interfaith participation in various customary events, they internalize values of respect, mutual cooperation, and consensus, which are essential in maintaining harmony in a pluralistic society.

This research provides an important contribution to understanding the role of local traditions in maintaining social harmony, especially within the context of multireligious communities. The study offers a new approach by emphasizing that local culture, in this case through *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan*, not only serves as a symbol of identity but also as an active operational mechanism in building and maintaining harmonious interfaith relations. These findings provide a fresh perspective on how traditions can act as instruments in conflict prevention and social integration, enriching the discourse on religious and social pluralism in Indonesia, particularly within indigenous communities.

Although this study provides in-depth insights into the role of *Rambu Solo* and *Tongkonan* in maintaining social harmony, several limitations must be noted. This study is limited to the Rembon Sub-district and does not cover variations of similar traditions or practices in other areas of Tana Toraja or Indonesia in general. Furthermore, this study relies heavily on interviews and participant observation, which may be limited in exploring deeper internal dynamics or potential tensions that do not emerge in customary settings. Future research could expand the geographical scope and involve quantitative analysis to more systematically test the impact of local culture on interfaith harmony in a broader context and over a longer time frame.

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