

## The Political Representation of Minority Group "Ugamo malim" in Toba Samosir

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**Abstract.** *In formal politics, one of the main issues that is often discussed is the lack of adequate political representation for minority groups. This also has an impact on the emergence of inequality in political policies which affects their level of welfare. This research will discuss the presence of political representation of the "Ugamo malim" or Parmalim community in the electoral contestation in Toba Samosir Regency in 2009. Representation in this case refers to the presence of someone as a representative of this minority group in the legislative institution through the general election process. Through research using a qualitative approach, this article shows how the political representation of the Parmalim minority community is realized in formal institutional structures and the impact of the presence of Monang Naipospos as a political representative on the Parmalim community. In realizing political representation, it is carried out through a sociocultural approach to attract public sympathy. The presence of Monang Naipospos has had a significant impact as a political representative of minority groups on the Parmalim community itself, as evidenced by improvements to educational facilities for the children of the Parmalim community.*

**Keywords:** *Minority Groups; Parmalim; Political Representation.*

### 1. Introduction

Minority groups are defined as groups that are considered by elites to be different and/or inferior based on certain characteristics and as a consequence they are treated negatively [1]. In terms of formal politics, one of the main issues that is often discussed is the lack of adequate political representation for minority groups. This imbalance in political representation refers to the situation that some groups or segments in society are not represented in the political decision-making process. The absence of representation from this minority group in some countries can be overcome by providing direct allocation of representation seats, such as for the Maori tribe in New Zealand and also the



Aboriginal tribe in Australia. [2] The impact is an imbalance in political representation, where the interests of the majority are often more dominant or prioritized compared to minority groups. This can result in policies that do not pay attention to the problems and needs of minority groups, as well as exacerbating existing inequalities and injustices in society.

The "*ugamo malim*" community or often called *Parmalim* can easily be interpreted as Batak land or can also be interpreted as "hamalimon" (purity), many members of this group live in Huta Tinggi, Toba Samosir, there they built a house of worship as well as a center gathering. In community life, local religious adherents also experience social exclusion and discriminatory actions by the state and society. This condition of course makes it increasingly difficult for local religious adherents to maintain their identity in society [3]. The issue of minority political representation is interesting to discuss because it has a significant impact on democracy, justice and equality in society, minority political representation plays an important role in ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their background, have a voice that is valued and heard in the decision-making process of political decisions.

The interesting thing in the context of political representation of minority groups is the presence of one member of their group who became a member of the legislature in Toba Samosir Regency in the 2009-2014 period, namely Monang Naipospos from the Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI). Of course, this is the first form of victory in terms of political representation that can be achieved by this minority group. In several studies, it is very rare to find political representation from local religious minority groups such as *Parmalim*. Mahpudin's study which examined political participation and its implications for the political representation of the Baduy community concluded that there was an absence of formal political representation from the Baduy community in Banten [4]. The presence of formal political representation is experienced by many minorities such as Christian minorities and Chinese, even to the point of being able to establish political parties [5].

The presence of representation from these minority groups ensures that minority voices are heard and represented in the political process and can help ensure that issues and interests relevant to these groups are raised and considered in the decision-making process. This research proposal wants to see how political representation from minority communities is realized, as well as the obstacles experienced in making it happen, how this representation is carried out, and whether Monang Naipospos as a representative has acted to represent the interests of *Parmalim*, what is the impact of the presence of this representation on the *Parmalim* community.

What we want to emphasize more in this research is not just that there are figures who are present as political representatives, but also about the efforts and patterns of relationships that are built towards their group and the majority group and what impact the presence of representation has on the *Parmalim* community. Discussions related to minority communities, discrimination, political participation, and related to *Parmalim* have also been carried out before.

Writing related to the title of this research has been carried out by many academics, several authors include: [6] about state discrimination against local religions, [7] about the construction of *Parmalim* identity, [8]–[10], regarding civil rights issues, [5] regarding democracy and Minority Politics, [11], [12] regarding the existence of the *Parmalim* community, [13] regarding Participation political. However, the shortcomings of this research do not focus on the population spectrum of minority communities themselves. [2] about political accessibility, where this research comprehensively discusses the issue of low accessibility for the *Parmalim* community. From various previous studies that the author has described previously, these works helped the author identify discrimination, minority communities, and identification with political participation.

## 2. Research Methods

Researchers use qualitative research methods, where qualitative research is a way of solving a problem based on facts and existing data. Qualitative research is an inquiry strategy that emphasizes the search for meaning, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols and descriptions of a phenomenon [14]. In line with the existing research questions, the type of research used is a case study. Based on the initial explanation and problems in this research, the research location is located in Toba Regency, Laguboti District, *Parmalim* Management Head Office.

The data source for this research will be obtained from the field, using the in-depth interview method. With the interview method, the researcher will know more in-depth things about the participants in interpreting the phenomena and situations that occur [15]. In this interview the researcher asked semi-structured questions because basically the researcher had prepared an interview guide, but in the form of open questions. Next, the researcher started with an opening question and continued with the points to be asked.

Parties who will be interviewed include:

1. Monang Naipospos, Member of the District DPRD. Tobasa 2009-2014, Ihutan *Parmalim*, Administrator of the Justice and Unity Party in Toba.



2. Tuana Manurung, Monang Naipospos' successful team in the 2009 general election.

3. Sopian Harianja, *Parmalim* Community Youth.

Data sources are also obtained through facts stored in the form of letters, diaries, photo archives, meeting results, souvenirs, activity journals and so on. Data in the form of documents like this can be used to dig up information that happened in the past. Researchers need to have theoretical sensitivity to interpret all these documents so that they are not just meaningless items.

Data collection is through archives and includes books about opinions, theories, postulates or laws and other things related to the research problem [14]. In this research the author used secondary data in the form of data from survey institutions, social media such as online news and journals, scientific works and academic books.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Political Representation

Representation, in German comes from the words *Vertreten* (speaking for) and *Darstellen* (speaking about, to depict). When someone represents, they are actually just speaking for the group or person being represented and speaking about a particular problem. Its existence as a political representative has an important role in creating the democratization process. This representation is realized in an effort to accommodate and channel community aspirations through open participation spaces that provide equal opportunities [16].

This contemporary representation cannot be ignored or avoided in politics. Representation in politics is playing a role for another (person/party) and identifying oneself with 'personation' or playing the role of another person and at the same time taking on the concept of ownership and authorization. Representation theorists believe that elections are the door that someone must pass through to become a political representative. The principles that underlie the election process are the principles that determine whether or not someone can be included in the category of political representative [17].

Currently, the role of representation cannot be ignored or avoided in politics. (Viera & Runciman, 2008) shows the fact that all modern countries today can be said to be representative states. What is meant by a representative state is that the state is run based on the government's ability to act and speak on behalf of the people.

By Hana Pitkin [17], in order to be considered a worthy political representative from a democratic perspective, a representative must fulfill the requirements, namely: (1) authorization, (2) substantive acting for (the act of representing in a meaningful sense); (3) accountability. Through elections, the relationship between voters and the representatives who will be elected can occur. This relationship formally reflects a form of exchange between voters and political representatives. From the voters (people or constituents) in the form of authorization to the elected representatives. From representative candidates who seek to obtain authorization from voters in the form of seriousness in their representative actions and accountability of the representatives towards their constituents. These three existing principles express the idea of democratic theory and are formal and occur simultaneously in an election contestation.

Pitkin in Nuri Soeseno's book identifies that there are four different views regarding political representation. These four views are formal representation, substantive representation, symbolic representation and descriptive representation. The first two views (formalistic and descriptive) explain representation as a 'way of acting' or 'acting for', while the last two views (symbolic and substantive) explain representation as a 'way of being' or 'standing for'. The important prepositions that will be discussed a lot from this theory lie in the prepositions of descriptive and substantive representation. Descriptive representation is used because there are similarities or similarities between the elected representatives and their voters, namely in this case Monang Naipospos as *Parmalim* and his constituents, namely the *Parmalim* community. Apart from that, Substantive Representation is also used to analyze whether the representative's activities are based on the interests of the community he represents, in this case whether Monang Naipospos as a representative acts and brings up issues that are in line with the interests of the *Parmalim* community.

Descriptive representation, this indicator highlights the extent to which political leaders have reflected the diversity and demographic representation of the society they represent. Descriptive representation can be measured by looking at the composition of the voter group represented by a political leader, such as gender representation, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic background, and the extent to which the policies proposed or adopted by the leader reflect the preferences and interests of voters.

### **3.2 *Parmalim* Overview**

*Parmalim* can be briefly defined as a person who follows the teachings of *Ugamo malim* (Malim teachings) who live based on the teachings and worship of Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon in order to achieve Huta Hangoluan (Heaven). *Parmalim* is also an old belief system that still exists today, especially among the Batak

people. The term *Parmalim* actually refers to personal identity, while the institutional name is called *Ugamo malim*. "Ugamo" in the Batak language means everything related to the spiritual realm, including the relationship between humans and the spiritual realm, and "Malim" means holy. If defined, *Ugamo malim* is everything related to Ngolu Partondion (Spiritual Nature) which is carried out based on the principles of holiness originating from Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon (Creator).

Belief in Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon is believed to have existed before Islam and Christianity came to Batak Land (Tobing, 1956). Even at that time, the Batak people could be said to still be in a state of no religion (Pagan). Batak paganism is a mixture of religious belief in Debata, animistic worship of deceased spirits and dynamism (Vergouwen, 1986). On the one hand, the worship of Debata is acknowledged to be very prominent, but on the other hand, elements of worship of deceased spirits such as the spirits of ancestors and worship of objects that are considered to have power are also integral or mixed parts in the form of religious application. , so that the boundaries of the three elements are not clearly visible.

The Government's attention to the *Parmalim* religion began after the 1978 Outlines of State Policy (GBHN) were issued as a result of the MPR General Session where in one of the points of the GBHN it was decided that the existence of believers in God Almighty needed to be fostered in such a way with the aim of increasing belief in the *Parmalim* religion. it should not grow into a new religion. With the 1978 GBHN, the Republic of Indonesia's Department of Education and Culture (Depdikbud) immediately formed a directorate tasked with providing services and guidance [18].

The emergence of *Parmalim's* sense of nationalism can be seen from his participation in the first elections in 1955. *Parmalim* was not included in the local parties which incidentally were in the Batak region such as the Sibual-Buali party, PRN, Lubuk Raya, Silindung Jaya, Samosir United and so on. *Parmalim* adherents actually prefer to join the Indonesian National Party (PNI) which has the ideology of Marhaenism [11]. Marhaenism is considered more suitable for those who adhere to *Parmalim* because it emphasizes the aspect of mutual cooperation and since then Marhaenism has been known and developed in Batak Land. During the New Order era, *Parmalim* experienced quite difficult times where various criticisms came from religious leaders, saying that *Parmalim* was heretical, irreligious and uncultured.

### **3.3 Realizing *Parmalim* Political Representation**

Peruzzotti (Suseno, 2013), political representation is closely related to general election activities and is formal. The interpretation of political representation as

representatives of the people produced through general elections to sit in parliament is generally accepted. When we talk about political representation, we automatically associate it with members of parliament who are elected through the general election process. Therefore, political representation has now become an inseparable part of an election and an important element in democracy. The emphasis of the study of political representation is on the representatives who are elected as members of parliament, how they carry out their functions in parliament, and the nature of their relationship with their voters. [17]

The sociocultural approach is intended to specifically utilize the social community in Batak land which is steeped in cultural, customary and religious values. The social structure of the community in Tobasa Regency is predominantly Toba Batak, and in the concept of the Batak ethnic social system, the approach method is regulated by a social structure called "*dalihan na tolu*" and "*marga*".

This was also explained directly in the researcher's interview with Mr. Monang Naipospos. This sociocultural strategy with clans is not only focused on the clan of the person who is nominating as a member of the legislature but can also be drawn further into the kinship system as explained by Monang Naipospos, the kinship system with his wife's clan, kinship with his mother's clan, and kinship with his wife not one clan but still in the same clan family.

"At that time, there was no kinship system, but for religious issues, what I immediately felt was that there was no such thing, in fact there was a supporter of mine whose profession was even a priest. "The kinship system is actually the most important factor, the partururan (clan) that we play, also includes my wife's clan, even the clan of my oppung (grandfather and grandmother) too." (Interview with Monang Naipospos, August 2023)

In the context of strategy, efforts to get voters' votes, this concept is also used as an important approach. The relationship patterns that are built interact directly with constituents (voters). Good family relationships are also a supporting factor where this has an impact on participation in formally electing a legislative / representation candidate. In essence, the basic thing that must be built is strengthening relations between the clan, clan family, clan relations with the wife, and other clans. This kinship approach certainly seeks to position Monang Naipospos very close to the community.

The most important thing regarding representation in this case is the advancement of Monang Naipospos, who incidentally comes from the *Parmalim* minority group. In an interview with him, he said that

"You could say that I came from the *Parmalim* community as an identity, yes, but there is something that needs to be underlined in this case, namely that those who chose me were actually not only from the *Parmalim* group, but also from community groups outside *Parmalim*." (Interview with Monang Naipospos, August 2023)

Thus, an explanation was obtained that the presence of representation from the *Parmalim* minority group was not only supported by that group, there was also support from people or communities outside *Parmalim* itself.

Disadvantaged groups should benefit from models of representation, especially descriptive representation. In descriptive representation, the representatives become themselves, they live in the same situation as the people they represent, black MPs represent black constituents and female MPs represent female constituents, and so on. Descriptive terms are actually interpreted more broadly than just physical characteristics such as skin color. This term is used to indicate experiences shared together. Thus, a member of parliament is elected by members of his constituents because he has the same experience as them (Mansbridge, 1999).

Minority political representation itself will certainly be realized if there is support from various elements such as the government, political parties, and also the majority community. Support from political parties for candidates for political representation from minorities has a major impact on inclusivity and representation in the political system. Political party support can provide legitimacy and necessary resources for campaigns. Without strong party support, a minority candidate may struggle to compete against a candidate from the majority. Political parties usually have access to resources such as campaign funds, organizational infrastructure, and public support. Minority candidates often need this support to overcome economic and logistical barriers that may hinder their participation.

By Miriam Budiarmo political parties are also often referred to as intermediaries (brokers) in an exchange of ideas (clearing house of ideas). Sometimes it is also said that political parties for the government act as hearing aids, while for citizens they act as "loudspeakers". (Budiarmo, 2015).

Political parties in this case provide political opportunities for minorities to have a platform or agenda that encourages inclusiveness, social justice and better representation for minority groups, specifically the *Parmalim* community. Political parties advocate policies that support minority rights, such as protection against discrimination, cultural recognition, and what is most highlighted in this case is providing political opportunities to advance as legislative candidates in Tobasa Regency.



### 3.4 The Impact of the Presence of Political Representation

According to Schmitt [17] identity is an element that cannot be separated from democracy; Identity is the basis for forming democracy itself. Similarities in one way or another between a group of individuals are a necessary element to form identity. The existence of a common identity will certainly eliminate the differences between the elected representatives or the people who rule (the ruled) and the voters or the people who obey orders (the ruled). In an article entitled "Should Black Represent Black and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes", Jane Mansbridge tries to explain that disadvantaged groups will certainly benefit from descriptive models of representation. In descriptive representation, the representatives will be themselves, they live in the same situation as the people they represent. Thus a member of parliament is elected by his constituents because he has the same experience as them. (Mansbridge, 1999).

The presence of representation in formal politics, namely Monang Naipospos, is certainly expected to have an influence on the *Parmalim* community, specifically influence in policy making which is expected to pay attention to aspects of the needs and interests of the *Parmalim* community.

In an interview with Monang Naipospos said; "Actually, I also advanced from *Parmalim* with a commitment to fight. First, so that the *Parmalim* community can also have pride, that one of them can enter the legislature. "Secondly, yes, I focus on education issues, education is the main aspect that I handle, coincidentally I am also on Commission C which handles the education sector." (Interview with Monang Naipospos, August 2023)

The presence of political representation from *Parmalim* in the legislative body certainly has a significant impact. These existing representatives can of course provide a voice in parliament for minority groups, and what is no less important is ensuring that their interests and views are recognized in the policy-making process. Of course, having political representation can reduce inequality in matters of representation and increase diversity in the political system. Another impact is sensitivity to issues faced by minority groups, specifically in this discussion the *Parmalim* minority group. With the presence of representation of minority groups in formal politics, issues that have not been raised to the public or captured by policy-making institutions, it is hoped that the opportunity for these issues to rise to the surface and be discussed will be even greater. The most important issue raised by Monang Naipospos was education. His presence brought a breath of fresh air to the children of the *Parmalim* community who were currently attending school.

The presence of Monang Naipospos as a representative of *Parmalim* tries to provide a new perspective in the field of education, specifically in Kab. Toba Samosir, according to his account, previously the children from the *Parmalim* community at school did not have teachers for religious studies, so the children from *Parmalim* who were at school found it difficult to learn religious lessons. Monang Naipospos then fought for *Parmalim*'s children to receive religious studies so that they come from a community that teaches and gives values to their children. Likewise for those who are Muslim, they should be given value by those who have capacity in their field. Not only that, Monang Naipospos also fought for this at the Ministry level, to create special education for believers on a national scale.

According to Urbinati and Warren (2008), representation plays an important role in a plural and complex democratic society. The existence of representation unites and connects citizens, and at the same time also draws them from the present and directs them to a future-oriented perspective. If seen from the perspective of participation and also the ability to think of citizens, representation can revive public attention to political issues. Through representation, the current interests, life experiences, and social and cultural ties of individuals are changed and political views about themselves and others are broadened.

Hanna Pitkin also explained the importance of maintaining the autonomy of the represented parties (constituents) and those representing them. The existing representatives must maintain the capacity of voter authority and also uphold accountability and capacity so that they can continue to act independently of the will of their voters. However, Pitkin also provides an important highlight that constituents must also be able to say what their needs and desires are [17].

By encouraging religious education for the *Parmalim* minority group in Toba Samosir, it becomes an important starting point for their educational climate. In fact, currently one of the universities in Semarang, namely the University of 17 August 1945, has provided a separate department for its students to study religious beliefs, namely the Belief in God Almighty Education Study Program. According to Monang Naipospos, there were as many as eight students there who came from the *Parmalim* community, and of course it is hoped that there will be more in the future.

By providing educational capital for children from the *Parmalim* community, it is hoped that they will be able to play a role in maintaining their values and cultural identity. It is hoped that there will be adequate education for the *Parmalim* community so that they will have pride and strengthen their identity as a cultural heritage. Apart from that, with existing educational capital, children from the

*Parmalim* community are also expected to be able to develop skills that are relevant in everyday life, both in dealing with existing developments in modernity and also in their traditions.

Apart from focusing on issues regarding education, other needs issues were also voiced in the legislative body by Monang Naipospos. In an interview with him, he revealed that the community is also quite active in voicing their needs and interests, meaning that the community has autonomy in conveying whatever things are necessary for their needs.

"Many people expressed various opinions, whether related to irrigation, repair and construction of roads, education issues are also included, the community can be said to be actually active in this matter to express their opinions, as well as for example with the heads of their respective villages -each. "But apart from that, there are also many problems and complaints from the community that we can not get through formal forums such as recess."

The needs, as stated in the interview with Monang Naipospos, are in the form of irrigation, road construction and repair, and education. Usually these needs are conveyed during the council members' recess. Of course, Monang Naipospos used this recess period to visit his electoral district and meet directly with the community.

In descriptive representation theory, representatives are themselves, and they also live in the same situation as their voters. With the same feelings and experiences between a political representative and constituents, it is hoped that policies will also benefit minority groups. Apart from that, with the similarities between a political representative and his constituents, or in this case the similarities between Monang Naipospos and the *Parmalim* group, it is hoped that as representatives they will not take actions for the *Parmalim* community that are detrimental, or actions that they (political representatives) themselves do not will do to themselves.

In this way, there is harmony between the presence of Monang Naipospos as a political representative of the *Parmalim* minority community and the theory of descriptive representation which focuses on elements of similarity between political representatives and constituents as well as the similarity of shared experiences between political representatives and constituents. Furthermore, there is the action and spirit of struggle of Monang Naipospos as a political representative of the minority group towards the *Parmalim* community itself, which is proven through improvements to educational facilities for the children of the *Parmalim* community.

Political representation which is present in defending the interests and needs of minority groups is an important thing in realizing justice and equality. A representative in formal politics is certainly expected to be able to care about minority groups, this shows his sensitivity to the diversity that exists in society. By taking sides towards minority groups, it is also hoped that we will be able to create more inclusive policies and ensure that the voices of minority groups are also heard, not just the majority.

Having a representative voice that represents minority groups certainly provides an opportunity for public policy making to better take into account various perspectives and needs that may have been overlooked. This can of course also inspire minority groups to become more actively involved in political processes, and can also have an impact on wider recognition. So, descriptive political representation, namely the existence of equality between political representatives and their constituents, not only has an impact on the benefits of the minority group, but can also enrich and strengthen democracy as a whole.

The presence of Monang Naipospos as a representative in formal politics plays a significant role and has a positive impact on *Parmalim*. According to Urbinati and Warren (2008), representation unites and connects citizens, and at the same time also draws them from the present and directs them to a future-oriented perspective. When viewed from the perspective of participation and the ability to think of citizens, representation can revive attention to politics. Through representation, the present interests, life experiences, and social and cultural ties of individuals are changed and political views about themselves and others are broadened.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Political representation is the main issue in this research, specifically the political representation of minority groups, namely the *Parmalim* group. The issue of the presence or absence of political representation will certainly have an impact on policy making which will affect every element in society. From the research results, it was found that a sociocultural approach is one way to attract as many votes as possible. The sociocultural approach in this research is intended for the social use of the community which incidentally resides in Batak land and is very steeped in cultural values, customs and religion. The social structure of the community in Toba Samosir Regency is predominantly Toba Batak ethnic and sociocultural concepts are regulated through approach methods namely "marga", and "Dalihan Na Tolu". The presence of this minority political representation, namely Monang Naipospos, is not only supported by the *Parmalim* group, but also gets votes from people outside the *Parmalim* itself. The presence of representation from minorities will of course only be possible if

minority groups truly participate in political issues in their areas of residence. Based on the research results, the presence of Monang Naipospos has had a significant impact on the *Parmalim* community, specifically in the education sector. The presence of Monang Naipospos as a representative of *Parmalim* tries to provide a new perspective in the field of education, specifically in Kab. Toba Samosir. The initial improvements made by Monang Naipospos in the field of education are certainly the right choice, because with the higher level of education obtained by members of the *Parmalim* group, this will have a positive impact on the level of understanding and political awareness of *Parmalim* members. With increasingly higher awareness, it will also have a positive impact on increasing their political participation.

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