

Kinship and Identity of the Toba Batak

in the Multi-ethnic City of Jakarta

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Urban cities in Indonesia have multi-ethnic people and the population is getting higher annually. Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia particularly is a mega city which holds the population of 10 million with various ethnics.

The Batak is an ethnic group which belongs to Proto-Malay and originally from a high rolling plateau in interior north-central Sumatra. The Batak is divided into six sub-ethnic groups: Karo, Pakpak, Simalungun, Toba, Angkola, and Mandailing. Their total population is about 6 millions that accounts for 2.5% of the population of Indonesia.

This study focuses on the kinship and affinal alliance of the Toba Batak who have immigrated from their homeland in North Sumatra to Jakarta, to elucidate the identity construction of the Toba Batak living in the multi-ethnic city of Jakarta.

The Batak living in Jakarta number approximately four hundred and forty thousand, and the largest sub-ethnic group is the Toba Batak among them. Their society has been ordered by patrilineal descent and asymmetric alliance. Exogamy operates at the clan level, with some exceptions. Each marriage establishes a long-term relationship of exchanges between two descent groups.

In the post colonial era, the Batak elite started to immigrate to big cities for education, and in 1960's under the Suharto administration, the number of immigrants who sought for jobs has explosively increased. I choose the city of Jakarta as my research area because I surmise more people live far from their homeland in North Sumatra, the relationship of the people in their homeland and Jakarta will be weak, because it will be difficult to visit each other often. I am also interested in how the Toba Batak people live in a huge city where they are ethnically and religiously minority.



relative gathering held every month (*punguan*)



Batak wedding at church



cloth gift with supernatural power (*ulos*) from bride's parents