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The struggle of Batak Simalungun for their identity in Church organization in Simalungun, Medan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the struggle of Batak Simalungun for their identity in church organization in Simalungun. This research uses a qualitative research approach, This qualitative research also uses an ethnographic approach. The qualitative research has at least five approaches and therefore can choose one of the five approaches. The results show about three demands of the Simalungun Batak movement over a special identity of Simalungun also include the church organization environment, where the entire Batak Church led by RMG touches on the original structures of Batak society and culture.

KEYWORDS

Struggle; ethnic; batak; simalungun; identity

Introduction

Simalungun is one of the sub-ethnic Batak located in the province of North Sumatra, Indonesia, and the center of the residence is Simalungun and surrounding areas. According to Tideman (1922) that Batak ethnic ancestors came from the South Indian region, and that opinion is also reinforced by Budi Agustono et al. (2012, p. 21) stating that the origin of the Simalungun people must have originated from migrants probably from South India given the cultural equality adopted by the Simalungun people and by some community groups in North Sumatra. Meanwhile, M. Joustra (1926, p. 59) mentions Simalungun is an Eastern Batak, who inhabits Tano Simalungun in the East of Toba Batak Land, and also east of Tanah Karo. Batara Sangti (1977, p. 146) mentions “simalungun” is a “Tano-Jau” which is defined as a place of Toba-elders who “drift” themselves into other tribal societies, or migrants to the Toba-elder lands. Further explained that in the books Pustaka in Central Toba-Tua country name ‘Batak’ not found as in books “Pustaka” Simalungun. According to J. Keuning (1958, p. 283), argues that the Batak tribe is one in the principles of civilization, but varies in its manifestation in material and spiritual life. He distinguishes that Batak includes: Karo, Simalungun, Dairi or Pakpak, Toba, Angkola and Sipirok, and Mandailing.

Simalungun people have a socio-cultural four main *kalan* (clan) namely: *Saragih*, *Purba*, *Damanik*, and *Sinaga*. Each of these principal clans has its branches, and the immigrant clans to this area then adjust to follow or become a sub-clan of the four principal genera. From *Saragih* clan principal, divided into various sub-clans, among others: *Saragih Garingging*, *Saragih Damunthe*, *Saragih Sitanggung*, *Saragih Turnip*, *Saragih Dajawak*, *Saragih Dasalak*, *Saragih Sumbayak*, and *Saragih Simarmata*, (Tideman, 1922, p. 90–91; Joustra, 1926, p. 199).

From the main clan Purba, divided into sub-clans: *Purba Dasuha*, *Purba Sidadolog*, *Purba Girsang*, *Purba Tambak*, *Purba Bawang*, *Purba Dagambir*, and *Purba Pakpak*. From this clan group *Purba Pakpak* is a clan who became king in the Kingdom of *Purba*. *Marga Purba Dasuha* became King in the Kingdom of *Pane*. The principal clan of *Sinaga* also has sub-clans: *Sinaga Nadi Hoyong Hataran*, *Sinaga Nadi Hoyong Bodat*, *Sinaga Sidahapintu*, *Sinaga Sidasuhut*, *Sinaga Porti*, *Sinaga Mandalahi*, *Sinaga Simanjorang*, *Sinaga Sidanlogan*, *Sinaga Simaibang*, *Sinaga Sidabariba*, and *Sidagugur Sinaga*. From the clan group, *Damanik* have sub-clans: *Damanik Tomok*, *Damanik Ambarita*, *Damanik Gurning*, and *Damanik Malau*. This *Damanik* clan occupies and then becomes king in the kingdom of *Siantar* which at this time has become the city Pematangsiantar (Henry Guntur Tarigan, 1974, p. 15; Wolfgang Clauss, 1982, p. 42, also Jahutar Damanik, 1974, p. 16).

In about 1900s the Simalunguns entered a new historical episode that brought them into the socio-cultural dynamic. In this period the Dutch with colonial politics expanded ‘*pax nederlandica*’ by extending its influence out of Java, and one of the targets was East Sumatra and Simalungun. On the other side of this period, the Germans also came and met with the Simalungun people. The German mission is to spread Protestant Christianity to the Simalungun people, sponsored by the Zending Rheinische Missiongesellschaft (RMG).

The expansion of the Dutch colonial administration to *Simalungun* aims to protect its economic interests in the form of securing and opening up the plantation area, so that a pacification effort is needed to the area previously regarded as independent. The impact of plantation opening and expansion in *Simalungun*, causing an increasing number of people from various ethnic who migrated to this area with various motives and ideologies. The ethnic groups that migrate to this region consist of Europeans, Chinese, *Keling*, *Java*, *Batak Toba*, *Mandailing Batak*, *Karo*, *Pakpak*, *Nias* and others. The Europeans, Chinese, *Keling*, are more oriented to the economic motives of plantations, and live in the plantation area so as to be less sociable with the local population. On the other hand, ethnic *Simalungun* as indigenous people must rise up against the current of the times and must give meaning to their life and take a rational or primordial attitude.

While the expansion of zending in its mission of spreading the Protestant Christian Gospel to Simalungun has included the spread of Western culture (Europe) and caused the rapid migration of local ethnic Tapanuli people especially to Simalungun. These migrants also come in with ethnicity, religion. Their initial motivation opened rice fields and formed settlements settled in the area of the Simalungun people. The Dutch colonial government seemed to let local migrants enter Simalungun because it could benefit the economic development of plantations, as well as the political balance of colonial government. Other migrants like Mandailing people go to Simalungun and choose to live in urban areas. While the Simalungun people with their presence as hosts are faced with immigrants with cultural, economic, and political conditions, as well as their respective ideologies.

The review of literature

Ethnic identity

The journey of human life can not be separated from the surrounding environment, which is, of course, the cultural and ethnic environment. The existence of ethnic differences in social intercourse should not abandon its identity even if between the two ethnic groups

that live side by side among different cultures. However, harmony and ethnic relationships are absolute in order for life to run smoothly. On the other hand, there is not a culture that is not influenced by other cultures. Similarly, the dominant culture or indigenous culture commonly influences the culture of the minority or the immigrant culture, and subsequently, the minority culture is affected by the dominant culture due to the cultural pressures of the culture itself.

According to Barth (1988, p. 10), there are two views on ethnic identity as observed: (1) cultural boundaries can survive even though the tribes mingle. In other words, the difference between ethnic groups is not determined by the absence of mixing, contacting and exchanging information, but rather due to the social processes of separation and unification, so that the different categories are maintained despite the exchange of membership roles among the ethnic units within the journey of one's life. (2) There can be found a steady, long-lasting and important social relationship between two distinct ethnic groups, which usually occurs because of the status of a divided ethnicity (dichotomy). In other words, the characteristics of each distinct ethnic group are not determined by the lack of interaction and social acceptance, but on the contrary, it is realized by the formation of a particular social system (Barth, 1988, p. 10).

In other words, ethnic groups are defined by boundaries and have or are characterized by the group itself, which then form its own pattern. Besides, cultural boundaries can survive although between two ethnic can mingle. The existence of ethnic differences in society is more due to the process of separation and unification so that differences can be maintained in the course of one's life. Besides, social relations in society for so long and run in such a way in a multiethnic society usually occurs more due to the status of ethnicity. Similarly, each of these different ethnic groups is based on the formation of social systems in society. Furthermore, Naroll as in Pelly, 2013, p. 21) mentioned the different ethnic groups are: (1) biologically able to reproduce and survive, (2) have the same cultural values and are aware of a sense of togetherness in a cultural form; (3) establishing its own communication and interaction network; (4) determines the characteristic of the group itself received by another group and can be distinguished from other population groups.

In addition to that, the importance of social context is necessary because a central point of departure in the social identity approach is that the impact of social groups on the way people see themselves and others around them cannot be understood without taking into consideration the broader social context in which they function. Early formulations of this theoretical position (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel & Turner 1979) focused on the proposition that social structures can be characterized by a number of key features (namely the permeability of group boundaries, the stability of group statuses, and the legitimacy of current status relations) that are also important determinants of the likelihood that people self-define either at the individual level or at the group level. Empirical work confirmed that people were more inclined to identify as group members when group status was unstable (promoting intergroup competition and social change), whereas the individual level of self-definition was more salient when group boundaries were permeable or inclusion in the group seemed illegitimate (see Ellemers 1993 for an overview). Further developments in the self-categorization tradition have elaborated on more immediate social contextual factors that may influence self-definitions and identity concerns (Turner 1986). The basic assumption here is that the relevant social context determines which categorization seems

most suitable to provide a meaningful organization of social stimuli, and hence which identity aspects become salient as guidelines for the perceptions and behavior of those who operate within that context (e.g., Oakes 1987; see also Deaux & Major 1987). Accordingly, research has demonstrated that people perceive their own and other groups in terms of different characteristics, depending on which comparison group or comparative domain provides the frame for their judgments (e.g., Doosje et al. 1998; Haslam & Turner 1992; Van Rijswijk & Ellemers 2001).

The concept of primordialism

The term primordialism is etymologically derived from the Latin word *primus* meaning first and *ordiri* which means woven or bond (Rustanto, 2015, p. 49). Primordialism in the Indonesian dictionary is an exaggerated tribal feeling (noun) (Alwi, 2016, p. 896). The bonding of a person in the first group with all the value obtained through socialization will play a role in shaping primordial attitudes. On the one hand, primordial attitudes have a function to preserve the culture of the group. However, on the other hand, this attitude can make an individual or a group has an attitude of ethnocentrism that is an attitude that tends to be subjective in looking at the culture of others. They will always look at the culture of others from their cultural eyes. This happens because the values that have been socialized since childhood has become an internalized value, and it is very difficult to change and be retained if the value is very profitable for himself.

Rustanto (2015, p. 50) says that ethnocentrism can be divided into two parts: (1) Ethnocentric inflection is an attitude that is subjective in viewing the culture or behavior of others, and (2) Flexible Ethnocentric is an attitude that tends to assess the behavior of others not only based on their own cultural point of view but also from other cultural point of view.

Not always primordial is wrong. But it can be judged as something to be maintained. In the perspective of teaching (ritual) for example. Perpetrators of primordialism are the most important elements when enacting its core teachings. The reasons behind the emergence of primordialism are: (a) The existence of something that is considered special in race, ethnicity, origin, and religion; (b) Want to maintain the unity of the group or community from external threats. The groups in question can be racial, ethnic, and religious groups; (c) The existence of highly esteemed values as they relate to the belief system, such as the religious value and the philosophy of life in it (Rustanto, 2015, p. 50). On the other hand, it can occur due to negative primordialism that is: (1) disrupt the survival of a nation, (2) hamper modernization and development process, (3) and undermine international integration.

Thus, primordialism is the idea or idea of a member of society that has a tendency to group so that the tribe formed. The grouping is not only in the formation of ethnic groups but also in other fields, such as grouping based on religious ideology and belief. Primordialism in sociology is used to describe the existence of the bonds of a person in social life with the things that were brought from the beginning of his birth, such as ethnicity, his birthplace, clan ties, and religion. Primordialism is an exaggerated term. Too proud of the tribe or race so often impressed disparaging tribes or other races. Primordialism is also a view or belief that holds the things brought since childhood, both about tradition, customs, beliefs, and everything that is in the first environment.

The concept of plural society

A plural society is a society of groups, living together in a region, but separated by their respective cultural lines. The plurality of a society can be seen from two variables, namely cultural pluralism and social pluralism. Cultural diversity is determined by social-genetic indicators (race, ethnicity, and ethnicity), culture (culture, values, and customs), language, religion, caste, or region. Social diversity is determined by indicators such as class, status, institution, or power.

Parsudi Suparlan (Ant.66, 2001, p. 2) notes about this plural society, he says that Indonesia is a plural society. What is striking about the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society is the emphasis on the importance of ethnicity manifested in the forms of ethnic communities, and the use of ethnicity as the primary reference for identity. Based on the physical or bodily characteristics that a person possesses, body movements accompanied by the language spoken and the spoken pronunciation, and the various symbols used, he or she will be identified as belonging to a certain ethnicity of a certain area by another person. If such characteristics cannot be used then the person will ask where it came from. Pluralistic society is a society in which there are differences (differentiation of social) consisting of various strata, economy, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture that goes with what it is. This society is still like society in general with various social realities, there is still conflict, conflict.

Dynamics concepts

The term dynamics is an altered state of affairs or ups and downs. The use of this term is based on the fact that there are fluctuations in the strengthening of ethnic identity of *Simalungun*. Dynamics also describes a state that is not static always moving from one situation to another situation. In the big dictionary of Indonesian language, it is mentioned that social dynamics is the movement of society continuously that cause changes in the living order of the people concerned. While group dynamics is the motion or power that belongs to a group of people in society that can cause changes in the living order of the people concerned (Alwi, 2002, p. 265).

The use of the dynamics concept in this research is to observe social processes in *Simalungun* ethnic within a certain time span where internal conflicts are found versus external complications to climax and then anticlimactic in the face of ideological strikes of migrants resulting in the establishment of GKPS institutions. The birth of the name GKPS was a climax in 1963 as a reinforcement of the *Simalungun* ethnic identity (*hasimalungunon*). There was some momentum before the birth of GKPS, that is 1903 is the beginning of the presence of Zending RMG (Germany) in Pematang Raya, 1907 *Simalungun* momentum submitted to the Dutch colonial, 1928 arose ethnic consciousness awareness *Simalungun* marked by the celebration in Pematang Raya, 1953 *Simalungun* recognized an area within the institution of Batak church, with the name HKBPS, and 1963 is the peak of strengthening the ethnic identity of *Simalungun* with the inauguration of GKPS.

Research methods

Types of research

To explain the dynamics of strengthening *Simalungun* ethnic identity behind the establishment of GKPS in 1963, researchers used a qualitative research approach. According to Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (2009) qualitative words simply emphasize on processes and meanings that are not studied strictly or have not been measured in terms of quantity, quantity, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative research emphasizes the nature of socially constructed reality, the close relationship between the researcher and the subject under study, and the pressure of the situation that makes up the inquiry. Researchers attach importance to the nature of value-filled investigations and seek answers to questions that highlight the way social experience emerges as well as its meaning (K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln 2009, p. 6). Qualitative research does not favor one methodology over other methodologies (Agus Salim, 2006: 36). The basis of qualitative research is constructivism that assumes that reality is plural, interactive and an exchange of social experience interpreted by each individual. Qualitative researchers believe that truth is dynamic and can be found only through the study of people through their interaction with their social situation. Qualitative research examines participants' perspectives with strategies that are interactive and flexible. Qualitative research is aimed at understanding social phenomena from the point of view of participants. Qualitative research is done by collecting words or sentences from individuals, books, and other sources. Therefore, this study uses interviews as a method of data collection so that researchers are able to dig deeper information about the interpretation of the individuals examined (Nanang Martono, 2015, p. 212). Thus, the meaning or understanding of qualitative research is the research used to examine the condition of natural objects in which the researcher is a key instrument.

Qualitative research has a characteristic. Characteristic of qualitative research methods that is as proposed Lexi J. Moleong (1997, p. 4–8) namely: (1) Natural Background, which is doing research on the natural setting or in the context of a wholeness (entity). (2) Man as instrument (instrument), researcher himself or with the help of others is the main data collection tool; (3) Qualitative methods; (4) Inductive data analysis, (5) the theory of the ground (grounded theory), more directional guidance direction preparation of substantive theory derived from the data. (6) Descriptive, data collected in the form of words, images and not numbers (Noeng Muhadjir, 1998, p. 29), and all collected are likely to be key to what has been studied; (7) More concerned with process rather than outcomes, qualitative research is more concerned with the “process” aspect of “outcomes”. This is because the relationship of the parts under investigation will be much more obvious when observed in the process, (8) The existence of the “boundary” determined by the “focus”, Qualitative Research requires the determination of the limit in its research on the basis of the problems that arise as a problem in (9) The existence of specific criteria for data validity, qualitative research redefines validity, reliability, and objectivity in other versions compared to commonly used in classical research; (10) Temporary design, qualitative research designs that are constantly adapted to field realities. So do not use the design that has been compiled strictly and rigidly so that can not be changed again, (11) the results of research negotiated and mutually agreed, qualitative research is more desirable than the interpretation and interpretation obtained negotiated and agreed by the human being used as data source.

Furthermore, John W. Creswell (2015) suggests there are eight characteristics of cultivate research: (1) Natural environment, that is, researchers collect data in the field where participants experience the problems studied in the research, (2) Researchers as important instruments, the researchers collect their own data by studying the documents, observing the behavior, and interviewing the participants. (3) Various methods, i.e. researchers collect various forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents; (4) Complex thinking through inductive and deductive logic. Researchers build their various patterns, categories, and themes “bottom up” by organizing the data inductively into the only information that is increasingly abstract, (5) the meaning of the participants. Throughout the research process, the researcher keeps a focus on how to study the meaning of the participants on a particular issue or issue, not the meaning that the researcher brought to the research or other authors; (6) New and dynamic design, i.e. the research process is always new and dynamic. Initial planning of research cannot be established, and that all stages of the process may change or change once the researcher enters the field and begins collecting data; (7) Reflectivity. Researchers position themselves in a qualitative study. Researchers convey their background and explain how these all color and influence their interpretation of the research information, and what conclusions or results they derive from the research; (8) Holistic discussion. Researchers try to develop a complete picture of the problems in the study (John W. Creswell, 2015, p. 60–63).

This qualitative research also uses an ethnographic approach. The qualitative research has at least five approaches and therefore can choose one of the five approaches. Creswell (2015) proposes five qualitative research approaches: (1) Narrative approach, (2) Phenomenology, (3) Grounded Theory; (4) Ethnography, and; (5) Case Study (John W. Creswell, 2015, p. 94–142). Meanwhile, YF La Kahija (2017) offers six approaches in qualitative research: (1) narrative-biographical approach; (2) Grounded Theory approach, (3) case study approach,; (4) approach to discourse analysis; (5) ethnographic approach; and (6) a phenomenological approach (Kahija, 2017, p. 1). Both opinions show similarities and both indicate an ethnographic approach in qualitative research.

This research uses ethnography approach. According to Arthur and Stanford in Norman K. Denzin Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. (2009, p. 30) ethnographic meaning in the broad sense is a science that focuses on efforts to describe the ways of human life. The ethnographic study was originally pioneered by the famous Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski through his monograph on society in the Trobriand Islands. Malinowski views ethnic groups as a territorial cultural entity neatly arranged and can be depicted on an ethnographic map. Each group has well-defined boundaries, separates the ethnic group from the other (Pelly, 2013, p. 4–5). A common feature of ethnographic research is a detailed description, which results from interviews with key informants, participant observation, and field notes during observation. Ethnographic data can be events, behaviors, or artifacts. The purpose of ethnographic research is a member description that contains information about the insider’s perspective (La Kahija, 2017, p. 16).

Place and time of research

The focus location of this research is the *Simalungun* area. *Simalungun* at the moment is synonymous with the district of *Simalungun* which since the beginning of its capital until

2008 is the city Pematangsiantar. After 2008 the capital moved to Pematang Raya, so geographically the territory of Pematangsiantar city is in the *Simalungun* region (Team 5 Saodoran, 2013, p. 9). With it then it is possible that the territory adjacent to the district of *Simalungun* or outside is also a concern to be observed as in the city Pematangsiantar, which is also the ethnic region of *Simalungun*. Also in the outer areas of *Simalungun* and Pematangsiantar districts, such as Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Papua and in santero Indonesia have spread the district of *Simalungun*. Historically Pematangsiantar city is part of the *Simalungun* region which is politically controlled by King *Siantar* of the *damanik* dynasty and since June 1907 established the Dutch East Indies government into a central government administration called *Afdeeling Simalungun* and Karolanden (Djoko Mariohandono & Harto Juwono, 2009, p. 11).

Discussion

The primary data of this research was collected from society in *Simalungun* Community. The chief tribal was interviewed in order to collect the progress and history of original culture, cultural linguistics in *Simalungun*. The interview was asked in unstructured form because the answer could be random and has extended explanation from resource of data. The close relationship between the researcher and object of the study were needed because by that the problems and issues could be solved effectively. Moreover, the researcher equipped the data from the Church to get to know the progress of each improvement in the society of *simalungun*. This study deals with the identity of a group of precious society so the primary data was collected randomly in order to qualify the interest of study and to find out the result of the study.

The congregation of *Pamatang Siantar* from the beginning of his life in 1907 consisted of a large ethnic Toba Batak immigrant group from *Tapanuli*. The congregation of the *Batak Simalungun*, including Abraham *Damanik* and Tuan *Batok* (Johannes) *Damanik*, has combined with the death of *Batak Toba*. From a small number of people, *Batak Simalungun* can be called also the name of Mr. Waldemar *Damanik* which in 1915 by the Dutch Government was appointed King of *Siantar swapraja* region. But the presence of such figures as a Christian and as King *Siantar* had no time to influence the ecclesiastical life of the *Pamatang Siantar* Church.

In the meantime it has arrived at *Pamatang Siantar* some *Simalungun Batak* Christians from *Simalungun Atas (Raya and Purba)*, to work as government officials of the self-governing government or the colonial government or to study at secondary schools in *Pamatang Siantar*. Among them is Jaudin Saragih, the leader of the *Simalungun Batak* movement. Upon its advocacy, *Simalungun Batak* Christians have asked the parish congregation of *Pamatang Siantar* to hold the *Simalungun*-speaking service, which was held from mid-1934 (Hutauruk, 1992, p. 158).

The reason for the language asked in the request was immediately accepted by the Reverend Israel *Tambunan* who was a Batak Toba. Reverend Israel *Tambunan* also affirms the membership of *Batak Simalungun* Christians in the big *Batak* Church, so there is no reason for divisions in the *Pamatang Siantar* congregation. Bregenstroth reported on the talks held between representatives of the *Batak Simalungun* Christian community and the church officials in *Pamatang Siantar*, but the news did not mention the language. The news said, How cruel the attitude of the youth was apparently from events such as this

one, when Mr. Jaudin Saragih came here he wanted that for a few people *Batak Simalungun* held a separate service, while all this time together visit the worship in the building big church here. The Character here directly provides a schoolroom for that purpose. But then they put forward the demand: we want to use the church building every Sunday morning. The Toba Batak people, in this case, are willing to fulfill the request, even if the group only covers 30–40 adults only, we want the church building, we are the owners of this area.

Another goal of the *Batak Simalungun* movement is to preserve the linguistic, cultural and geographical elements of the *Batak Simalungun* ethnic group within the HKBP church environment, given that the cultural and ethnic elements of the *Batak Angkola* and *Batak Toba* have no hesitation to enter into HKBP during the process of Christianization of the two *Batak* sub-tribes. Thus, the *Batak language* of *Angkola* originally acted as the language of the church in the congregations of *Angkola*. The same is true with regard to the *Toba Batak* language in *Silindung*, *Humbang*, and *Toba* areas. Also, with regard to membership in the HKBP synod management board which was formed in 1929 people heed the tribal differences. Members are elected as district representatives, as well as representatives of ethnic groups who inhabit the district. And the number of members of the Synod Board is determined by the presence of the elements of entis and by the size of the districts.

Based on all these facts, in the “*Simalungun-Pesisir Timur*” district synod in 1933 the representatives of both the Greater congregation and the Seribudologists urged the wish that the synod of the HKBP synod districts of “*Simelungun-Pesisir Timur*” be represented by a *Simalungun*. In a proposal submitted by the representative of the Greater, congregation stated: “In the new HKBP synod management board there must be a member of the *Batak Simalungun* tribe, just as there is also an *Angkola Batak* representing the district of *Angkola*. Because the interests of the *Toba Batak* Christians who became immigrants in the area of *Simalungun* can be understood and defended by members of synod board representing *Silindung*, *Humbang* and *Toba* areas. Candidates must be nominated by Praises (district chair) and elected by the district synod.

In a similar suggestion proposed by the congregation of the Seribudologists it is further clarified by passing the diversity of the *Batak* tribe by region: “The members of the synod committee should be chosen on the basis of their favorite and regional origins, so that the nature and clan of the tribe can be known and represented”.

Both the content and the arguments of the proposals are contained in the letter of Jaudin Saragih he wrote to Ephorus Landgrebe found the main reason of 1933. In it can be found the main reasons, namely to ensure the preservation of ethnic identity of the *Batak Simalungun* in the organization and environment of the church. Among other things, he did not come to attend HKBP synods in 1931 and 1932, because of his belief since so many years that the HKBP synod was not at all interested in the language (*hata*) and *Batak* (*Simalungun Batak*). He wanted to present elements of the language and culture of the *Batak Simalungun*, in the whole *Batak* Church, and therefore he proposed in the *Batak* Church, and therefore proposed the establishment of the *Batak* district of *Simalungun*, in order to have a *Batak Simalungun* who could defend the interests of the *Batak Simalungun* in the Board of Synod HKBP, because he can understand the interests of the *Batak Simalungun* people. Due to *Simalungun* customs and customs (noun customs do *hata Simalungun*) there is no meaning for the *Batak Toba* people, it is necessary that

Simalungun Batak Christians unite in one district, and one of them must be a member of the HKBP synod management, because he can understand the *Batak Simalungun*. Tuan knows that the Toba Batak people in the *Simalungun* area, no matter how many, remain a foreign guest to the *Simalungun* people and to the aristocratic-minded self-governing government. But in the church environment, the situation is reversed: the *Batak Simalungun* people seem to be foreign guests, because they do not have their own districts, and the synod member representing *Simalungun* is a *Batak Toba*. Indeed, it is natural that the representative is a *Batak Simalungun*. Because even though the synod member of *Simalungun* is not a *Batak Toba*, there are still three members of the synod's board, representing *Silindung*, *Humbang*, and *Toba*, who can understand and defend the *Toba Batak* customs. But all this time in the synod board there is no *Batak* or a priest sending Europeans who speak the language and customs of the *Batak Simalungun*. On the other hand, in *Angkola*, although there are only 12,000 Christians in the middle of an Islamic majority, there is a separate *Angkola* district, although in that area there are also *Batak Toba* people. It is true that the *Simalungun Batak* Christians only number 4,000 but there are still about 100,000 *Batak Simalungun* people who can still be invited to embrace Christianity. For all that reason, the district synod still selected a *Batak Toba* (J.Hutapea) from *Pamatang Siantar* as the Vice-District.

Similarly, in contrast to the ethnic-cultural identity of the *Batak Simalungun* people, it has been renamed "*Simalungun* district" or "*Simalungun*-east coastal district" to "the eastern coastal districts of Sumatra, Aceh, and Tanah Dairi". Until 1935 the fifth district of RMG in Tanah *Batak*/HKBP was called the *Simalungun* or *Simalungun* districts of the East. The name includes all the congregation of the *Batak Simalungun* as well as the congregation of *Batak Toba* in the area of *Simalungun* and the East Coast of Sumatra. And since 1932 the district includes also the congregations of the *Batak Dairi* and *Pakpak* and the congregation of *Batak Toba* in *Dairi* and *Pakpak* areas. That way the fifth district is the biggest district in HKBP. It was necessary that the area be used as an excuse for the 1935 district synod to rename the new name "the coastal districts of East Sumatra, Aceh, and Tanah *Dairi*", disregarding the cultural identity of the *Batak Simalungun* Christians.

In the 1935 synod district news report, there was no mention of any contradictions from the Party of the Kingdom and the Seribudolog at the synod. But in a letter dated 27 October 1937 addressed to the pastor Zending H. Volmer at Seribudolog, Reverend J. Wismar Saragih considered the name change as unjust. For him, Reverend J. Wismar Saragih does not make sense if the name *Simalungun* abolished, but the East Coast region, Tanah Aceh and Tanah Dairi combined to the area *Simalungun*. Already since the beginning, there are five districts HKBP, namely *Angkola*, *Silindung*, *Humbang*, *Toba* and *Simalungun*. However, due to the expansion of the task area of Mr. Chairman in *Pamatang Siantar*, the name of *Simalungun* was abolished. In this opinion means that *Simalungun* no longer has a relationship with the HKBP synod, so he as the *Simalungun* Batak messengers will not come again at the HKBP synod. Even in the district synod, there is no need to attend a *Batak Simalungun* Christian, as long as no longer held a synod of *Simalungun* district.

Refusal to participate in the HKBP synod and the district synod was a challenge. But the delegates from the Kingdom and the Seribudolog, including J. Wismar Saragih, remained present in the district synod and thus confirmed the demands of the *Batak Simalungun* for the recognition of their tribe within the HKBP environment. The last chance to restore the

name “*Simalungun-east coast*” There was a district synod in 1939. The synod discussed the design of the church order that would prevail in the period 1940–1950 and in which the old name reappeared. But the restoration of the old name is clearly based on the errors of Ephorus who had drafted the design of the church when J.Wismar Saragih returned to defend the original name; the meeting referred to the decision of 1935, but also suggested that the district name be changed to “North Sumatra District”. This proposal was rejected, and still retained the name “East Coast of Sumatra, Aceh and Tanah Dairi”. Therefore, the efforts of the Batak *Simalungun Batak* community to defend their cultural and ethnic identity in the structure of the HKBP. *Simalungun* people’s desire for identity is still not understood and ignored by the RMG and the Christians *Batak Toba*.

One reason for this is the view that the origin of the *Simalungun* and Toba people is the same, so that people tend to underestimate differences in language. The view was visible when L. Bregenstroth made the following statement: It is now firmly stated that the *Simalungun* was hardly a true *Batak*. In the meantime, the village of King *Siantar* origin is in *Ambarita*, *Samosir*, called *Lumbannabolak*. And the great man of *Simanindo*: so that at every party of their custom they are invited by King *Simanindo* and vice versa. People *Simalungun* enough to understand the Toba language, but nowadays deliberately every language deviation used as a literary language.

In its first report in 1937 on the customs and languages of the *Batak* of *Simalungun*, a Dutchman who conducted a *Simalungun* language study named P.Voorhoeve stated that, the inhabitants of the *Simalungun* region saw its origin for the great majority of the island of *Samosir*. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the *Simalungun* language is basically only a Batak-Toba language dialect. If anyone concludes that the *Toba Batak* language should be preserved as the language of school and church in the *Simalungun* area. A false conclusion, it can be found in the 1937 annual report of the Bregenstroth zendeling, which reported that, A year ago the government had appointed a linguist, Dr.P. Voorhoeve, with the task of recording the *Simalungun* Batak Language and Tradition. *Batak Simalungun* people put much hope in the work produced by P.Voorhoeve. But the difference is not so great; they are both from *Samosir* Island, this is according to Bregenstroth, which is actually wrong in terms of *Batak Simalungun* and *Batak Toba* have the same viewing the customs and languages.

Conclusions

The demands of the *Simalungun Batak* movement over a special identity of *Simalungun* also include the church organization environment, where the entire Batak Church led by RMG touches on the original structures of Batak society and culture. This is especially true with regard to three cases. The first is the need for a special *Simalungun* language church service in Pamatang *Siantar*. In addition, the Batak *Simalungun* people demanded a membership in the big board of HKBP church which includes all the Christian Batak people. And finally, they want the new district name “The East Coast District of Sumatra, Aceh and Tanah Dairi” to be abolished and replaced by the original name “*Simalungun District*”. These demands have been established in a way the community preserving their right and cultural values. The indigenous people accept the concept of plural community by letting and respecting other group of people demonstrate their own culture in the environment of *Batak Simalungun* people. In addition to that, the original language and

authority of church in *Simalungun* were given special concerned for the development to the hand of indigenous people. Society and culture in *Simalungun* will never alter with other cultures. The possibility of community living together is welcomed and appreciated because the unity is better than separation.

Conflict of interest

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