

Coercive And Voluntary Assimilation: A Comparison Of Chinese Assimilation Under The New Order And Assimilation With The Simalungun Ahap

Ratna Saragih¹, Wensdy Sitindaon², Frainskoy Rio Naibaho³, Rafika Dear Saragih⁴

¹ratnasaragih12@yahoo.co.id

²sitindaonwensdy@gmail.com

³frainskoy.rio.naibaho@gmail.com

⁴rafikasaragih3002@gmail.com

Abstract

The various ethnicities in a certain area have implications for the emergence of a new order to determine the new composition of society. The formulation of new values takes place over a long period of time with a dynamic form of negotiation between ethnicities in it. The acceptance of all parties to the new order can be done through forced and voluntary assimilation. Coercive assimilation is done with dominant power through policy, obligation and lack of choice. In the Indonesian context, forced assimilation is still fresh in memory with the fusion of Chinese identity into Indonesian through a series of imposed policies. Conceptually, assimilation brings together differences to merge with the larger society and become a new, harmonized form. In reality, this forced assimilation still leaves a form of ethnic Chinese inequality until now. This pessimistic form of assimilation implies the impossibility of voluntary assimilation in Indonesia. However, in a small area of North Sumatra, Simalungun district, voluntary assimilation has been going on for a long time and is able to unite the differences that exist by all units of difference. One of the drivers of assimilation is the use of the Simalungun ahap which is able to bind and make Simalungun a common good. This optimism gives hope to Indonesia that assimilation can be something genuine to unite the many tribes, religions and races that exist.

Keywords: forced assimilation, voluntary assimilation, diversity, Simalungun Ahap.

INTRODUCTION

Identity differences have become one of the factors create social disintegration in society. This tendency can be of particular concern so that efforts can be made to minimize less inclusive attitudes in groups. The attitude of acceptance towards differences in identity begins with the existence of certain common values. The similarity of values facilitates the acceptance of individuals and groups merging into one group. The process of accepting differences in identity begins with a reciprocal relationship in daily social interactions. This statement is corroborated by research from (Ang, 2013) that acceptance of differences in group identity can be seen from the intensity of communication and mutual benefit from reciprocal relationships.

Since colonialism, Simalungun people have been accustomed to mingling with migrants (newcomers). The arrival of migrants was for the economic development (plantations) of Dutch Colonial companies. This can be seen in research from (Saragih et al., 2019; Siregar et al., 2020) that the Dutch Colonial sent many immigrants to the Simalungun region to open rice fields and plantations. This changing context shaped a more open attitude towards migrants (Mandailing, Toba, Javanese, etc.). This is reinforced in research from (Kurnia, 2019) many Toba Batak people entered Simalungun by one of the Ihutan kings Andreas Simangunsong. He was in charge of administering the Toba Batak migration to Simalungun land. At the same time, when referring to statistical data in the past and present, there are significant changes. In 1880 the population in Simalungun was only in the range of 100,000 people 141 years later, there were 859,228 people with a record 50% dominated by the Javanese tribe. (Badan Pusat Statistik Tapanuli Utara, 2019).

Changes in the composition structure of Simalungun society encourage a certain value order to continue to create social cohesion. The negotiation of Simalungun Batak identity takes place in the social, economic and political realms. Simalungun identity can still stand out and be accepted by all community entities. The flexibility of Simalungun to be able to enabling in the structure is inseparable from the basic principles of Simalungun which are more moderate. The fundamental difference between the Toba Batak tribe and the Simalungun tribe is in their nature. If the Toba Batak expresses its goals more assertively, while the Simalungun Batak prefers

to avoid direct conflict. This assumption makes the Batak Simalungun more flexible towards the presence of new people in Simalungun land.

Simalungun does live in its homeland, but at the same time it is not the majority in its own land. This reality certainly requires identity reconstruction in order to integrate with other tribal entities. The reconstruction of Simalungun identity (hasimalungunon) is the starting point for binding all tribes in Simalungun. Simalungun no longer belongs only to Batak Simalungun but all those who have ahap Simalungun. The spirit of ahap Simalungun is a middle way that can be accepted by all entities of Simalungun society. The inclusive narrative that develops in the Simalungun community helps to meld all different identities to recognize and legitimize the jargon of ahap simalungun.

In the context of Simalungun society, there is an inclusive jargon, namely "ahap Simalungun (Simalungun flavor)". The emphasis on ahap Simalungun is explained by (Sinaga, 2016) namely: a form of value that is felt in daily life by the Simalungun community despite the different backgrounds of individuals. This attitude makes it easy for every individual living in Simalungun to always be open to new people. It is this openness that makes it easy to form a sense of unity for all different groups to merge into the Simalungun ahap. The reality of the inclusive attitude of the Simalungun tribe can be seen in a concrete form in religious life. Especially in Raya Sub-district, Simalungun Regency, where there are very few tribal churches. The majority of Raya District residents are affiliated with the GKPS (Simalungun Protestant Christian Church) tribal church.

In particular, the value of inclusiveness can be seen in the development of the church in Simalungun (Kecamatan Raya). At first the GKPS church was affiliated with HKBPS (Huria Kristen Batak Protestan Simalungun) so it was familiar to use the Toba Batak language during church services. This can be seen in research (Saragih, 2018) the establishment of GKPS on September 1, 1963 and officially separated from HKBP. The historical attachment to the Toba Batak tribe has led to the inclusion of inclusive values in the GKPS. This reality can be seen in plain sight with the absence of HKBP churches in Raya sub-district. The majority of the Toba and Karo Batak tribes can unite with the GKPS church.

The fusion of identities in the GKPS church by various different ethnic identities can maintain the status quo of

society in Simalungun. In the GKPS church, all identities merge in the Simalungun ahap so that no discriminatory actions are seen in certain tribes. All GKPS members have the same potential to have roles and functions in the church. But to see clearly about the assimilation of the GKPS congregation does not just happen. However, there are many factors driving the assimilation process of the GKPS congregation. The manifestation of assimilation is seen in daily life between the Simalungun, Karo and Toba tribes.

In general, the assimilation of the Batak tribes of Simalungun, Toba and Karo is seen in the form of marriage. This cross-tribal marriage makes it easier to understand the differences between Batak tribes in Simalungun. Cross-tribal marriage also suppresses the ego of supremacy in one's own tribe. Each different tribe is no longer distant in understanding other tribes. They have internalized the differences they have and eroded the stigma that has been a common sense. The erosion of stigma and understanding of mutual differences can be seen in research from (Fajri et al., 2016). This study explains that many couples with different ethnicities feel many positive things. Positive values are manifested in more tolerance for differences and a desire to learn about the culture of their partner in the family.

Assimilation is not something new in the context of society in Indonesia. When referring to the concept of assimilation, it always moves dynamically towards a society that is united with various differences. The source of conflict is inseparable from the tendency to accentuate differences between groups in society. The arrival of other ethnic or racial groups in certain areas results in friction over differences in procedures, culture, language, religion and customs with the indigenous population. This has also been the main problem faced by ethnic Chinese from the beginning of their arrival until now. The most basic and vital thing about the existence of ethnic Chinese is that they are considered as people without a history with Indonesia. (Choppel, 2003). When looking at the roots of identity, it makes ethnic Chinese difficult to be accepted by the local population in Indonesia. Ethnic Chinese need a strategy and a path that can deliver their group to become part of Indonesia that cannot be released and is firmly embedded with Indonesia.

The issue of ethnic Chinese incorporation has been carried out through both top-down (government-community)

and bottom-up (community-government) mechanisms. The collective memory of ethnic Chinese towards the government is not good because it is full of discriminatory and repressive actions. This can be seen from research from (Pertiwi, 2021; Walid, 2020; Zamroni, 2019) how ethnic Chinese are restricted in their space of expression. The desire for conflict resolution does not only come from the government's desire. Ethnic Chinese still want a good solution that gives them the comfort of living in Indonesia. If the solution only comes from the government, local residents or ethnic Chinese alone, it is difficult to reach a formula that is acceptable to all parties. This research tends to see that assimilation can be achieved if desired by all parties with mutually agreed terms.

It is undeniable that the top-down mechanism offered by the government during the New Order era was only able to eliminate some of the ethnic Chinese identity but not integrate into the wider community. Assimilation is not determined by the desire of one party alone but is based on voluntarism and the benefits gained to integrate into the wider community. Some cases of voluntary assimilation have seen results and benefits in several regions in Indonesia (including ethnic Chinese). Usually, ethnic migrants see difficulties if they are too different from the local community so they tend to be discriminated against and are less comfortable socializing in the community. As social creatures, they tend to adapt themselves to the surrounding environment such as using the local language, converting to a religion or intermarrying. This research (Atabik, 2016; Zamroni, 2019) explain that voluntary assimilation occurs because of the desire of the migrant tribe/race to be more comfortable living together with the local population.

Literature Review

Government and Local Community Interventions in Melding Migrant Tribes in Indonesia

Indonesia with the principle of *bhineka tunggal ika* has become a steady concept to be able to accommodate the existing diversity. This can be seen from how all different ethnic and religious groups can be united in one bond of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). All restrained the egocentricity of each group and put the public interest as the top priority in establishing the Indonesian nation. The experience in establishing the Indonesian nation and the process that followed should be a strong basis for accepting

outside groups that enter Indonesian territory and live as one. These groups are widely dispersed and have lived together with the local population for centuries. The process of assimilating ethnic Chinese in Indonesia went through a series of unfavorable collective memories. From the beginning, the government and local people did not believe in the Indonesianness of ethnic Chinese. It is undeniable that ethnic Chinese have not yet planted strong roots of identity to the Indonesian state. These doubts and suspicions continue to linger in the life of society and the nation. These doubts and suspicions, in an unstable social and political situation, can be detrimental to ethnic Chinese. Not a few historical traces capture the forms of discrimination, repression and injustice experienced by ethnic Chinese. Some of these studies (Muntholib, 2008; Pertiwi, 2021; Rahardjo, 2005; Winarni & Badriyanto, 1967; Zamroni, 2019) explain the attitude of discrimination into a collective memory experienced by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. This reality shows that ethnic Chinese still have not merged into a single entity with the local community.

The resolution of the assimilation process of ethnic Chinese was also carried out by the government through several regimes. Since the Soekarno regime, the government has been skeptical of the ethnic Chinese. (Kharimah Aryani, 2022). The Soekarno regime issued policies that discriminated against the position of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. The position of the ethnic Chinese was further marginalized during the reign of Soeharto who severely restricted the ethnic Chinese from expressing their identity in Indonesia. The government's pattern of intervention for ethnic Chinese to be assimilated into the local community. The biggest mistake of the assimilation process of ethnic Chinese is only by limiting and banning the expression of culture, religion, writing and language. (Dewi, 2013; Suryadinata, 2003; Walid, 2020). The government ignored the important essence of persuasive assimilation to make ethnic Chinese voluntarily assimilate into the local community.

The process of assimilation is always dynamic and there are many factors that prevent it from taking shape in society. In Indonesia, assimilation is hampered by government policies and actions that tend to be repressive towards certain ethnic minorities. In some countries, the process of assimilation is also hampered by various factors including the social currents that are developing in society. In research from (Forrest & Johnston, 2019; Hiromi Ono, 2002; Hitti & Killen,

2015; Kiong, 2014) stated that social flows that allow racism and discriminatory attitudes make it difficult for migrants to integrate into the wider community. The form of treatment received by migrants in everyday life with racist and discriminatory actions forms a pattern of social segregation. Social segregation actions in the form of residence, school, interaction in minimizing the impact of racism and discrimination from the wider community.

This study also explains that the assimilation process can be hampered if there is no space that can fully unite different cultures. One effective way to unite the differences of several different cultures in society is through the marriage process. In marriage, it becomes a process of uniting two or more cultures that are bound together in forming a family. Differences as much as possible are compromised to be able to accept each other from cultural differences. This is what is explained in research from (Barkan et al., 2011; Ezra, 2006; Qian & Lichter, 2007) that the quantity and quality of marriages across flavours and ethnicities within a particular region can result in assimilation in society. The experience of intermarriage across races and ethnicities is more likely to provide mutual understanding of one another. In the end, tolerance is more developed and suppresses the tribal ego that exists in each internal group.

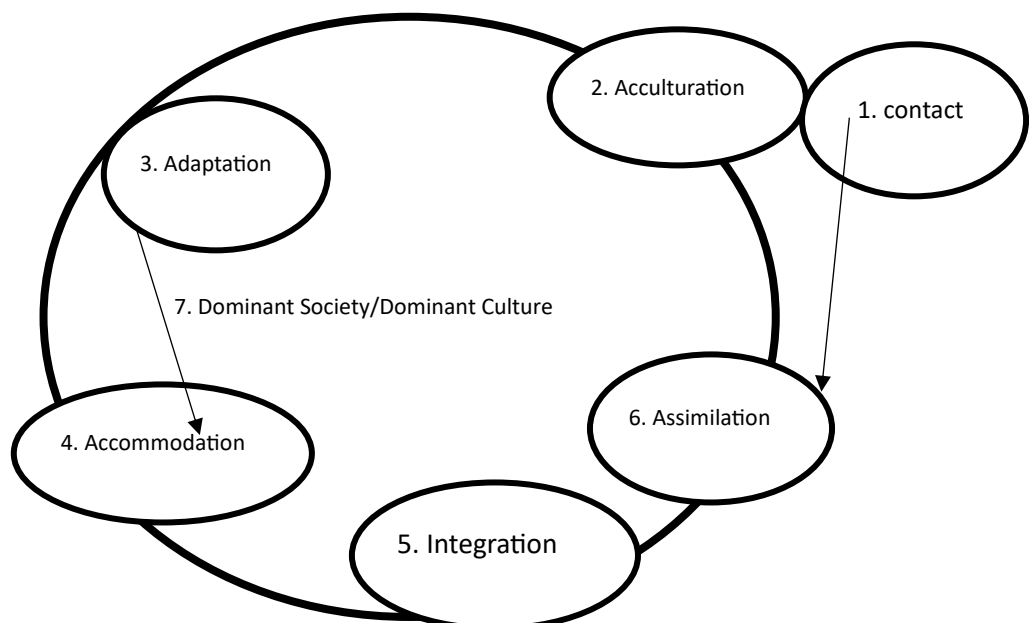
In this study, it is seen that assimilation can occur if it is done for the benefits obtained and all parties are willing to integrate into the community. Assimilation cannot happen if only the ethnic Chinese want it or the local community. A sense of mutual need and desire is at the core of the assimilation process in society. Local people no longer have suspicions or doubts when ethnic Chinese are close culturally, religiously, linguistically and in their lifestyle. Even in a more advanced stage, the process of assimilation becomes possible with intermarriage in the community. Racial and ethnic intermarriage leads to the blurring of identity that has been constructed in society. Chinese ethnics can no longer detach themselves from Indonesia because there is something in them that is deeply embedded and cannot be removed. The community also consciously recognizes this and begins to build a new conception of Chinese ethnic identity in Indonesia. Local people have the assumption that ethnic Chinese have become fellow countrymen who have strong historical roots to be recognized as equal. This recognition can never actually be

given to ethnic Chinese because the status of Chinese is still an outsider in the state.

Assimilation

Assimilation does not take place quickly and instantly so it goes through several long processes. The assimilation process includes various internal and external dimensions of the group so as to achieve acceptance of shared values. In research from (Barkan et al., 2011) that assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion of individuals and groups with attachment to memory, sentiment and behavior through sharing the same experiences and history. The elements of the assimilation process include many factors such as the following: identity, language use, norms/values/culture, organizational membership, networks, personal relationships and partner choice, status recognition, interest in the homeland, citizenship and political involvement, residential mobility, job mobility, personal goals, interaction ties with the larger community. All of these dimensions occur gradually and with various dynamics within the group.

In this study I used the acculturation, integration and assimilation model that has been applied in America (Barkan et al., 2011). Based on the reality of different regional, social, cultural and economic contexts in Indonesia (Kab. Simalungun), it can give different or the same results. Thus, researchers try to use the same model to analyze the existence of ethnic groups that are the subject and object of this research. The following is a model of acculturation, integration and assimilation of ethnic groups in the new area they live in:



Description

1. Stages of change
2. The boundary between immigrants and the dominant society
3. A dotted line indicates a break in the relationship with the land of origin

The assimilation cycle process is further explained by (Barkan et al., 2011) first, the contact that occurs for the first time after the arrival of migrants in a new location and meeting local people. At this stage, immigrants are still nostalgic and strongly attached to their homeland. As such, their cultural frame of reference and values are still very much attached to their area of origin and are reluctant to change. There is a tendency for immigrants to form residential clusters and various associations that are familiar and close to themselves. At this stage, there is also contact with local residents on a temporary and periodic basis.

Second, acculturation in the first generation has occurred with greater cultural exposure in the new area occupied. Gradually, they have used the local language and participated with the local community. This is also corroborated by Gillin and Raimy in (Nelson, 2018) that acculturation is a process of adaptation to new conditions of life. As the process of community culture has been modified as a result of direct contact with one or more cultures in society. At this stage, it has been seen that the membership of groups that have lived and joined local residents so that they are often directly involved with various activities / ceremonies (secular / religious) of local residents. In the economic sector, it can be seen that they rely on ethnic networks and are often in similar jobs or in accordance with existing labour groups. There has also been an emergence of a middle class of entrepreneurs, clergy and possibly worker activists. The transition to the birth of the second generation of migrants led to a search for greater interaction with society. In the second generation, there is already an element of integration. Likewise, immigrants who arrive in a new place at a young age have the potential for more sustained cultural contact with the surrounding community. At this stage, there are also cross- racial/tribal marriages with local people, making it easier to gain strong legitimacy in the new place. There is also a tendency for local people to feel disturbed and resist when migrants enter politics. This is

inseparable from the strong legitimacy of ties to traditional cultures that are different from other groups, migrants who are too dominant to return to their homeland and thus have little experience of acculturation. The consequence of maintaining his memory of the land of origin so that he actually never immigrated in mind but only physically. In practice, they become too exclusive or even separate their beliefs (religiosity) from the dominant group and stay very long in this stage. Likewise, a group of people who have hostile experiences with the dominant society and are vulnerable to discrimination. Now with the advancement of advanced technology, it is easy for migrants to stay connected with their homeland so that they can still have influence from their place of origin in a less significant form.

Third, there has been a balance of adaptation between the number of births from the original land and the new place in the internal group. Substantial acculturation (use of local language) has occurred especially among the local-born generation in the changing subculture of ethnic migrants. Religious and secular community leaders and institutions including the media are forced (required) to make some adjustments to maintain their influence with group members. At this stage, the focus of the group is less on the land of origin and more on the culture of the dominant group, although social status is still tied to the ethnic community. There has been progress in day-to-day treatment with a (small) reduction in conflict situations, discrimination and rejection within the community. The persistence of some separatist, elitist, militant and exclusive beliefs are attempted to be excluded from the migrant group in order to fit in with the dominant group in the community and still live together. At a more advanced stage, the second and third generations of migrants have begun to separate themselves from the ethnic group, including through changes in religious affiliation. On the other hand, there are still immigrants who do not go that far even though they have done some integration through extensive associations with members of different identities such as: schools, unions, sports teams, service clubs, and spouses.

Greater inter-ethnic contact has resulted in intermarriage, increased social economic mobility, reduced tribal enclaves, diversified occupations (no longer ethnically bound), and many members have sought status and recognition from outside the group. Finally, there has been immigrant participation in politics and worker organizations.

This is seen in the second generation of group members and has moved to urban areas. The immigrant community as a whole has shifted to using the local language and activities that require integration with the dominant society. At this stage, it is also seen that community leaders have restricted maintaining the organization because it is more politically oriented, this is to gain a wider political base including other ethnic groups around them. Frictions and conflicts with members of the dominant community are rare, not institutionalized or limited to areas of conflict. Likewise, migrant members at this stage are far less likely to advocate or pass on some separatist or militant ideology.

There are already considerations of occupation, social class, education, geography, even mobility for interracial marriage and the possibility of significant changes in religious affiliation. Substantial identification shifts through expansion in the form of duality (multiple) and the possibility of competition, loyalty in public places. Consequently, there are more fractures in the circle with a large situational context in the public sphere. Marginality is still a major issue and individuals begin to exit the group and may seek to assimilate into the dominant society (enter another group). As a result, the permeability of ethnic ties becomes vital for ethnic subcultures and sub-societies including some of their organizations and communities that begin to disappear through deterioration in relations with the dominant society, continued contact with the land of origin, and renewal in migration. Indeed, the influx of new migrants from the homeland (individual migration) has continued and rejuvenated some groups. Finally, we find some individual integration in academic, nostalgic interests (memory) or curiosity about the past to be renewed with the interests of the present context but that is usually in a limited impact in the overall vitality and culture for the ethnic community.

Fifth, the integration of community character manifestations that have a level of inclusiveness and merging with the dominant community has been achieved. Although residuals of culture, identification, symbolic and behavioural characteristics, language expression, traditional food and ceremonies/celebration of traditional activities have been carried out periodically (certain times only). When considered in the chart, the circle has entered the dominant society even though it has not been completely broken (the circle has not been completely cut off). Substantially assimilated structures

can already be observed including a large percentage of residential distribution, membership in common organizations in the community. Some people have achieved a high level of education, significant social economic mobility and sometimes there is a relative economic status attached to certain ethnicities. Some ethnic religious institutions may not yet exist, but ethnic organizations of a general character, publications and leaders are of nominal or minor importance to individuals (serving only certain needs and functions as a particular ethnic group). In the absence of reinforcement by new immigrants in ethnic reinforcement, over time communication has begun to weaken and become less active. Non-aligned situations involve the wishes of the larger society (dominant society), which makes ethnic immigrants behave in a certain way (ethnic/unique character) within a limited area (around their place of residence). In general, most individuals at this stage have identified themselves with the dominant society. Expressions of ethnic identity are done in marginal areas or symbolically in relation to land of origin and ethnic affairs. Nevertheless, some individuals or sub-groups still find continuity in personal, cultural, economic, political or specific values or interests that are activated by perpetuating some of their group ties, activities and ethnic identity.

Sixth, assimilation in the circle on the diagram is already entirely within the general society (dominant society). Most formalistic or limited group memories are passed on to a few people. Although the descendants of the ethnic group at this stage are blended into the larger society (dominant society) culturally, socially, institutionally and by identification. While individuals may still maintain knowledge of their ancestors, they no longer see themselves as members of the group. Over time, these descendants as racialized ethnic groups can be incorporated into the dominant society. Most importantly, the dominant society no longer considers or perceives membership of the dominant society as different. Similarly, frictions and conflicts are no longer related to ethnicity. Especially for ethnic communities with membership at this stage, there are already few organizations and publications that function, except for religious purposes. Likewise, immigrant ethnic groups have actually ceased to exist to achieve their goals and interests so that even if they exist, they are limited to ceremonial or certain festival purposes. Nevertheless, ethnic groups accomplish these things on an individual basis rather than as an ethnic group. It can be

understood as the experience of a specific ethnic community in a specific location and not required of the ethnic community as a whole, which has ignored the differences that exist. It is rarely the case that all members of an immigrant ethnic group reach this stage. The core society model shows a quest for acceptance, integration and possible assimilation. It includes all belonging to undifferentiated or significantly intermixed descendants who have had a single descent, thus identifying themselves as the core and being recognized for it. Among the overall population some have a history of being ready to access avenues of power and influence. Beyond this, it has been suggested that non-ethnic individuals and groups in society in general have defined and identified themselves to a greater extent with others than in traditional ethnic terms. The goodness of the core culture determines norms, values, morals, ideals, cultural patterns and practices, social class distinction criteria, and the goodness of religion - religious symbols, principles, institutions and meanings so that they become the formal rules of the land.

Research Methods

In this study using a qualitative approach with data collection techniques interviews with informants. Researchers approached key informants who could provide rich data as primary data in this study. Researchers in this study used an interview guide to direct the research to the expected data. The interview guide already consists of several topics and sub topics of research. Researchers also get data and analysis not only limited to descriptive. Researchers explore the depth of data on informants to reveal the reality that is happening in the community. This is further explained in (Neuman, 2002) that a qualitative approach can understand and reveal and analyze social reality in society. The analysis in this study is related to the inclusive nature of the Simalungun community in everyday life. This includes the process of merging the Simalungun, Toba and Karo Batak tribes in the GKPS church.

The researcher's interest in the topic of the assimilation of the Simalungun, Toba and Karo Batak tribes is inseparable from the researcher's experience and observations. The researcher lives and lives in Pematang Raya so he knows the general picture. When compared to other areas in the Simalungun area there are big differences. In quantity, the Toba and Karo Batak tribes already have the capacity to build their own tribal churches. But interestingly,

there has never been an agenda and discourse from the Toba and Karo Batak tribes to establish their tribal churches. This is actually a big question mark for researchers. What is the fundamental thing that makes the Batak Toba and Karo tribes feel at home and want to join the GKPS Church. In collecting data, researchers categorize informants according to the breadth and capacity of the topic under study. Researchers in this case made two categories, namely: key informants and ordinary informants. Key informants include individuals who have extensive knowledge of the topic issues under study and are able to open space for other key informants. Ordinary informants are individuals who are research subjects who can validate data from key informants. This research prioritizes the objectivity of data and analysis results so as to reduce bias by the researcher's interpretation. In maintaining objectivity, researchers used data triangulation techniques. Researchers validated data from one informant with other informants. Researchers found patterns from interviews by researchers with informants so that they could be included in data analysis. Data triangulation techniques have become a standard for achieving data validity and analyzing qualitative research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chinese Assimilation in Indonesia: Ethnic Chinese Tensions and Violence in The New Order

Ethnic Chinese are not new residents in the republic of Indonesia and have a long history of helping to establish this country. (Dkk, 1993; Sam Setyautama, 2008). This role is certainly a strong legitimation that ethnic Chinese are no longer outsiders but have become insiders manifested by their sense of nationalism (Oberg, 1917). (Oberg, 1917). However, this is something that is common in the reality of Indonesian history to be quite discriminatory against immigrant tribes in Indonesia. In many of the literature that we learn in elementary school to college, it rarely explains the role of foreign tribes in the establishment of the Indonesian nation. Even though there are not a few foreign tribes such as Maeda (Japan), Multatuli (Dutch), and there is an Egyptian country that first recognized Indonesia's sovereignty. This foreign contribution is certainly a record for Indonesian history that this country was built on diversity and openness to immigrant tribes.

The role of China as an ethnic minority is indeed a dilemma for both the government and the local population.

Especially during the New Order era, China's position was limited in government and politics but privileged in the economy. When referring to the theory of intermediary minorities, it is very relevant to the portrait of China in Indonesia. (Winarni & Badriyanto, 1967). In the intermediary minority theory of (Light, 1981) that ethnic minorities can be scapegoated in chaotic political situations because the authorities need victims who can bear their mistakes. In this case of course ethnic Chinese in Indonesia look different and are more prosperous than the local population. The conditions are ideal to be the target of public anger for the mass losses suffered by the community for a long time.

Entering the old and new order era, the position of ethnic Chinese was continuously persecuted by the pressure of the majority group and the government. The peak occurred during the New Order era with the agenda of assimilating ethnic Chinese into Indonesian citizens. The mechanism of Chinese assimilation in Indonesia is structured and massive and follows the logic of modern bureaucracy. The use of modern tools through a logical and organized bureaucratic system is not a new thing to suppress unwanted groups. This case had happened in Germany for the Jews who were genocide in a structured and bureaucratic manner by the rulers at that time. (Baum, 1982). This portrait of world history is being repeated in Indonesia, although to a lesser extent. Bringing the agenda of Chinese assimilation with the local population is a positive thing that can integrate Indonesian society. The manifestation of this agenda is expected to strengthen the social life of citizens. However, in reality, there are more elements of violence contained therein.

The violence of identity restriction is most felt by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Many ethnic Chinese individuals are forced to change their Chinese names to more Indonesian (local) ones. (Cipta, 2021). The change of Chinese names was legitimized by the regulation of Presidential Instruction 14/1967, in the form of circular letter No.06/Preskab/6/67 addressed to ethnic Chinese to change their names to be more Indonesian. Restrictions on the expression of Chinese identity were also carried out with restrictions on all writings, culture and religion that were considered to contaminate Indonesian culture. This case is seen in many literatures from (Laylatul Fittrya, 2013; Walid, 2020) with the prohibition of ethnic Chinese expressing their identity in society.

The position of ethnic Chinese is increasingly difficult with the development of grassroots discourse. Hate labels began to be constructed with various statements and manipulative realities to support sara (ethnicity, race, religion) actions. This discourse developed widely and massively, causing considerable casualties in several crucial political moments such as the 1998 riots. Forms of riots in the form of arson, looting, sexual violence and murder with a record of the majority of ethnic Chinese victims. This was recorded in the news from *kompas.com* (Ningsih, 2023) stated that through a joint fact-finding team (TGPF) 1,190 people were killed only in the Jakarta area. It is important to note that ethnic Chinese were not accidentally victimized. It all started with a government policy that discriminated against ethnic Chinese, which triggered sara actions at the grassroots.

The position of ethnic Chinese who are separated from the local population has existed since the Dutch period with latent interests in it. (Cipta, 2021; Suryadinata, 2003). Entering the old order, Soekarno's government limited Ethnic Chinese to only be allowed to engage in economic activities and were not allowed to enter government and politics. The transition of government to the New Order worsened the situation with many policies that prohibited Chinese identity in the Republic of Indonesia. (Choppel, 2003; Muntholib, 2008; Pertiwi, 2021; Rahardjo, 2005; Walid, 2020). New freedom and freedom were felt by ethnic Chinese during the reign of Abdurachman Wahid (Gusdur) with the recognition of China for its Confucian religion and culture. (Mustajab, 2015; Wensdy Sitindaon, 2019). The above conditions have led us to a continuous flow about ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Ethnic Chinese have been treated differently over time and Indonesia has not been able to accept them fully and vice versa. The assimilation program also seemed too forced and became a formal slogan. Assimilation ultimately led Indonesia to the position of repressing the minority (Chinese) so as not to become equal to the existing local ethnicities.

Is Possible to Create the Potential for Voluntary Assimilation of Ethnic Chinese?

Eliminating a national entity is not a good way out for the future of a country. The nation must be able to evaluate itself so as to create positive changes for a better civilization. This includes ethnic Chinese who have become a national entity with a long history. The civilization of the nation is determined by how the

nation treats and manages its citizens equally and fairly. Ethnic Chinese have a bad history with discriminatory treatment by the local population. Initiatives can be taken to encourage the Chinese to become an integral part of the Indonesian nation through voluntary assimilation. This project certainly determines the future of the country to become a great country that is able to manage its citizens (wellbeing). If this is achieved, it is possible for Indonesia to become a role model for citizens of the world to be able to treat all different citizens equally.

In making major changes in society, it is important to consider two existing methods, namely top down and bottom up. (Prastowo, 2014). By relying on a top-down strategy, it is expected that the government (macro) will formulate various issues and ideas to be reduced to a policy that can make positive changes in society. In contrast to bottom up, which explores all the good practices that the community already has. This good practice is expected to become a point of awareness from the community and then spread it to the wider community. This research tends to choose a top-down strategy to produce voluntary assimilation of the Chinese. It is important to note that the top-down strategy can be successful with a good precedent set by the country's leaders. It cannot be denied that leaders are the milestones that can lead the nation to great goals.

The leader's awareness is one of the most significant determinants of the success of the top-down strategy. If the nation's leaders still have a negative stigma about the Chinese tribe, it becomes very impossible to assimilate with the local population. This is relevant to research from (David Iliendar, 2017; Harahap, 2000; Isnaini, 2017; Susanti, 2015) that the role of leaders to set an example and apply it in the form of policies determines the success of assimilation. The case of China for recognition of itself and its culture can also occur during the reign of Abdurrachman Wahid. In this period, the flow of diversity and tolerance discourse was very strong. The flow of diversity discourse is transmitted by the leader (Gusdur) who has awareness and concern for marginalized tribes (Chinese). It can be seen that the awareness of the highest leader can be executed in the form of policies that bind all citizens. In the contemporary context, Chinese culture and Confucianism have been recognized by the state and are free to be expressed in public spaces.

In the end, we have optimism about the domestic situation regarding the potential for voluntary assimilation to be carried out on its merits. Unfavorable circumstances are factors that can encourage the formation of voluntary assimilation. The collective memory of ethnic Chinese who are treated discriminatively and victimized in every tragedy of the country's crisis encourages voluntary assimilation to be carried out by internal initiatives. In the concept of assimilation, the process of cross-racial marriage is the most effective way to realize it. In the case of Indonesia, cross-racial marriages (Chinese with local people) have occurred. This can be seen in research from (Atabik, 2016; Ramadhan et al., 2015) that the marriage process is able to deliver an understanding of the gulf of difference that separates two races/tribes that are culturally and characteristically different. It is in this case that the bottom-up approach can be carried out because there is experience and understanding after being part of a group from a different tribe.

Sometimes assimilation can also occur because of a desire to fit into the established structures of society. Harmonizing with existing structures can be done by integrating into the religion of the local population. Religion becomes a medium for fusing different elements of society into the most rational reason for achieving assimilation. In Durkheim, it is explained that religion can be an adhesive and give meaning to life for each individual in his life. (Michael McCullough, 2003). This potential provides a great opportunity for ethnic Chinese to become closer and have a common sense of religious bond with the local population. This reality has been verified by various literature from (Ayu et al., 2009; Fitrya, 2013; Rochmawati, 2004; Yusuf, 2009; Zamroni, 2019). stated that religion is able to integrate differences over ethnicity and prioritize religious similarities as social glue. The form of individual awareness harmonizes with the structure of the local community in the end giving birth to voluntary assimilation that benefits together.

Ahap Simalungun: A Manifestation of Simalungun Inclusiveness Towards Other Tribes

Changes in social structure are accompanied by changes in values, culture and forms of interaction in society. The resulting values are usually a form of shared experience and negotiation of social situations that last long enough. The experience of the Pematang Raya community with the arrival of other ethnic

groups (Toba, Karo, Nias) was obtained in daily activities. Even if quoting from Weber's writing in (Ritzer, 2011) that modern humans and cities are required to be interdependent with one another through the specialization of each individual's work. Understanding this condition, of course, the arrival of other tribes has given complexity to the diversity of culture, language, attitudes and religiosity. In this case, diversity is certainly not directed at the social segregation of each individual in society. Instead, diversity becomes a form of distinctiveness by developing a tolerant attitude towards existing differences. The unification of elements of ethnic diversity is carried out with a jargon that is quite popular among Simalungun people, namely ahap simalungun.

Ahap Simalungun when developed in an area with diverse ethnicities can be inclusive and minimize discriminatory attitudes. The background of the development process of ahap Simalungun in Pematang Raya is inseparable from the character of the Simalungun tribe. In contrast to most of the popular Batak tribes, the Simalungun tribe is more moderate and avoids direct confrontation. (Wensdy Sitindaon, 2019). This reality makes the Simalungun tribe more open to other tribes and willing to accept and mingle together. The Simalungun tribe in Pematang Raya also has an awareness that they are not a single entity in the region. There are various tribes present in Pematang Raya and must live and stay together in the community. This condition certainly makes the Simalungun tribe still have to be the master without going through a hard way because it is not in accordance with the Simalungun character. Instead, through a moderate path, the Simalungun ahap was born, which is able to accommodate all the different entities in Pematang Raya. The land of Simalungun eventually no longer belongs only to the Simalungun tribe but turns into a sense of belonging to other tribes (Toba, Karo, Nias) to make Simalungun a common good.

Ahap Simalungun emerges with a sense of shared ownership of the Simalungun identity. Ahap Simalungun constructs feelings from various ethnic backgrounds to be bound together in one feeling, namely ahap Simalungun. The sense of belonging together to Simalungun can be seen from informants' statements in the field. The following is an interview with Mrs. Wau:

I have only been in Simalungun for 3 years because I married my husband who is from Pematang Raya. At first, I had

some difficulty interacting because of the different language and culture but because the people here are open, I was able to adapt. The Simalungun roots are most noticeable in my husband (Mr. Gea) because he has been in the GKPS church since he was a child. Even though my husband is Nias, he shows his life more as a Simalungun. I also think that the Simalungun ahap is not only owned by the Simalungun tribe but also outside Simalungun like my husband.

From the description of Mrs. Wau's statement, it explains the sense of Simalungun ahap from tribes outside Simalungun. The sense of Simalungun does not just appear in individuals outside the Simalungun tribe. The feeling is the result of a comfortable attitude and provides opportunities for tribes outside Simalungun to own Simalungun. This was also conveyed by Mr. Harefa who comes from the Nias tribe as well, namely:

When it comes to Simalungun ahap, what I know is the sense of belonging to Simalungun. In my family, it is most visible in the children who were born here even though they are not Simalungun, but they always feel that they are Simalungun. Even for my children, Pematang Raya has become their village.

The informant's statement above shows that the sense of Simalungun ahap has crossed generations in tribes outside Simalungun. The sense of Simalungun is no longer an external part of the migrants but has been internalized in the self, thoughts and manifested in daily practices. Mr. Harefa's description of his son who migrated far away but was Simalungun became the color of the identity shown. Both through language, attitude and religious affiliation still refer to Simalungun. This reality states that voluntary assimilation has been successfully carried out by the Simalungun community to the migrants.

However, in this case there is an understanding that ahap Simalungun can be a dangerous jargon. It is dangerous if interpreted in a narrower context such as ethnocentrism and primordialism. Such ahap Simalungun can become a form of harmony and potential conflict that can occur in society. Basically, this form of Simalungun ahap in the narrow sense still exists in the community although in a relatively small and limited form. It is possible that this narrow sense of Simalungun ahap in certain social, political and cultural situations can threaten disintegration in the community in Pematang Raya.

This can be seen from the statement delivered by Saragih's brother in the following interview session, namely:

Ahap is not just a word or sympathy but there is a sense of intimacy in it. If there is for example my family who is running for sintua because he is my family even though he is not qualified or qualified, I will vote for him because there is a feeling of ahap, but if I already hate him and even though he is my family then the ahap is lost to him who is hated. The application of ahap also occurs when there is an election in one area, so people in their own village are preferred over others.

Saragih's brother's statement has demonstrated the practice of using ahap in a narrower identity. Ahap has multiple sides and its use depends on the individual using it. If ahap is used for group interests, it can create divisions in society. In practice, ahap can be used to defend one's own group and bring down other groups. Thus, we can see that ahap becomes a public good whose function is to defend the public interest. Ahap does not only rely on sympathy in it but also enters the realm of intimacy. The role of ahap in the realm of intimacy allows it to trigger extraordinary implications. This is the researcher's opinion that the Simalungun ahap becomes a common property (not individual/group) and is used as a common good that can be a common benefit in society in Pematang Raya.

The idea that the Simalungun ahap can be owned by tribes outside the Simalungun tribe can also be seen from the following interview quote with Mr. Damanik, namely:

Ahap Simalungun emerged because of the presence of immigrant communities outside the Simlaungun tribe. So, if the community itself then ahap Simalungun is rarely said because they are fellow Simalungun people. I think Ahap is like self-adjustment. Ahap Simalungun has a broad meaning. Even when migrants come to the Simalungun area, they already have ahap because the Simalungun people consider migrants as their own brothers.

Mr. Damanik's description of ahap Simalungun confirms that ahap Simalungun emerged with the arrival of tribes from outside Simalungun. Ahap Simalungun is intended to state that even though they come from different tribes, they can be united and considered as brothers by the Simalungun tribe. The treatment of the Simalungun tribe as brothers to the Toba, Karo and Nias tribes provides comfort and no

discrimination. Of course, over time, the tribes outside Simalungun no longer feel different from the Simalungun tribe and make Simalungun a common property.

Bridging Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Through the GKPS Church In Pematang Raya

Modern humans are in an uncertain condition of a very dynamic life that can threaten psychologically and physically. The uncertainty of modernity makes humans look for ways to find the meaning and purpose of life that suits them. It is not much different from the people of Pematang Raya binding their identity and meaning of life through the religion they adhere to. In this case, it can be seen that GKPS is a strong bonding milestone for the people of Pematang Raya to get the meaning and way of life in accordance with Christian values. Interestingly, it can be seen that in Pematang Raya GKPS is able to attract the interest of different tribes (Toba, Karo, Nias) to become a unity within it. The initial entry process could be because there is no tribal church option available. However, in its journey, it is very minimal for tribes outside Simalungun to separate themselves from GKPS. Even up to the second and third lineage remain in the GKPS church. This can be seen from the following statement by N Harefa:

The Simalungun tribe is open and easily accepts other tribes living in Pematang Raya. Likewise, the GKPS church builds a sense of brotherhood in the church that influences us to feel at home in Simalungun. GKPS is also very open to tribes from outside Simalungun. From my point of view, I also see that GKPS is the church of God and is already comfortable in this GKPS. In fact, I do not agree if there is the establishment of another tribal church in Pematang Raya because GKPS is enough.

The same statement was also made by Mrs. Sinambela, who has lived in Simalungun for a long time and has a variety of experiences. The following is a statement from Mrs. Sinambela:

I have lived here for 23 years because I migrated here with my husband. My neighbors here are friendly and open. Here I attend the GKPS church and that gave me the opportunity to work with the Simalungun congregation. At that time, I also became a member of GKPS because only GKPS has a tribal church.

If the two informants above explain about the GKPS church from tribes outside Simalungun. So, the informant's statement from the Simalungun tribe can strengthen the validation of the form of acceptance of different tribes in the GKPS church. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. W Damanik:

In Simalungun there are many newcomers who have different tribes from one another. These newcomers do not yet have their tribal church like HKBP so these newcomers join GKPS. Newcomers who are already in the GKPS church will find it difficult to switch to another church. They will find it difficult to adapt again in a new church like HKBP, they will learn again even though it is their tribal church. Toba people will also feel awkward to join the HKBP church because they are already with the GKPS.

The same statement was also conveyed by an informant from the Simalungun tribe by Brother R Saragih as seen in the following quote:

I see that the ethnic diversity in GKPS makes the people feel comfortable, they can blend in with the Simalungun tribe. They have integrated with people outside their own tribe. In the GKPS church there is no differentiation, everyone in it gets the same opportunities. As I see in my church, all people from outside the Simalungun tribe have the right to serve in the GKPS church such as syamas and sintua.

All informant statements above, whether from the Simalungun, Toba, Karo, Nias tribes, have a common thread that is interconnected. It cannot be denied that the beginning of the entry of various tribes into the church in GKPS was due to the lack of tribal churches in Pematang Raya. However, it is not the lack of tribal churches that is interesting from the topic of this research but GKPS is able to accommodate tribes to belong together. It can be seen from the narrative of N Harefa who is very far from his origins from the Batak tribe being able to have a sense of togetherness in GKPS. Simalungun values and characteristics have been internalized in him so that he has a Simalungun ahap. It is even clearly stated that he does not agree if there is another tribal church established in Pematang Raya. Likewise, from the interview quote with Mrs. Sinambela, who initially became a GKPS congregation because there was no HKBP church in Pematang Raya. Spiritual needs must still be met in order to find the meaning of life in humans. Given that GKPS and HKBP are still in the same stream and are

distinguished only in language, it is rational to choose GKPS. The treatment and attitude of the GKPS church congregation that does not discriminate provides comfort for Mrs. Sinambela to church at GKPS. If at the beginning she entered the GKPS as a formality as a Christian, then the passage of time has given quality to her sense of GKPS. Mrs. Sinambela is no longer an outgroup in GKPS but melts and merges into GKPS who belong to one another.

The experience of diversity in GKPS was also clearly conveyed by informants from the Simalungun tribe in the interview session. Mr. Damanik said that the Simalungun tribe is open and mingles with different tribes in Pematang raya. The most obvious form of acceptance from the Simalungun tribe in the GKPS church is when other tribes (Toba, Karo, Nias) enter. In fact, it is not only accepted but also given flexibility and freedom so that different tribes can be comfortable and able to become a large GKPS family. Likewise, Saragih's brother said that tribes outside Simalungun have merged and blended into one in GKPS. There is no discriminatory attitude towards different tribes because it can be seen from being given the same opportunity for church positions to all tribes. Finally, it can be seen that the Simalungun church embodies a form of *ahap* Simalungun that can unite different tribes in the GKPS church. The growth and development of the Simalungun *ahap* cannot be separated from the role of the GKPS church in building an inclusive climate.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethnic Chinese have experienced discriminatory attitudes and restrictions on cultural and religious expression due to the absence of assimilation with the local population in Indonesia. Sometimes ethnic Chinese also become scapegoats in situations of economic and political crisis. The potential assimilation strategy of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia can be done with a top-down approach accompanied by policies that accommodate the needs of all ethnicities involved. The top-down strategy can be implemented by first having the leaders of public officials realize the importance of ethnic Chinese (just) for the future of the nation. *Ahap* Simalungun emerged with the arrival of migrant tribes to Pematang Raya to be used as common property, *Ahap* Simalungun can only be owned by migrant tribes through a long process or approximately 10 years so that Simalungun values are internalized in themselves. The sense of *ahap* has two opposing sides: in a positive and

negative form. The positive form builds a sense of accepting others who are different and able to live together. Meanwhile, the negative form emphasizes a narrower sense of individual and group interests. Positive ahap is integrative and negative ahap is disintegrative.

SUGGESTIONS

1. It is necessary to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and cultural restrictions towards ethnic Chinese so that the assimilation process can occur in Indonesia
2. Encourage all public officials and national leaders to be aware of Indonesia's future by not setting a bad precedent for ethnic Chinese.
3. Ethnic Chinese are more integrated and adapted to the existing social structure so that they are more accepted as part of an integral part of Indonesia.
4. It is necessary to further develop diversity in Simalungun, no longer just limited to similarities in customs and culture but also extends to religious diversity in Pematang Raya.
5. The growth of other tribal churches needs to be considered so as not to damage the harmony that has been built within the GKPS church.
6. District government. The province and center can use GKPS as a good example of implementing inclusiveness in the church which has implications for the integration of different ethnic groups in Pematang Raya.
7. The Pematang Raya community needs to develop a sense of Simalungun ahap so that they can embrace differences and make Simalungun a common good.
8. Migrant tribes who have just lived in Pematang Raya are increasingly developing forms of cultural modification and adaptation so that they can integrate into wider society.

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