

MIGRATION, COLONIALISM, AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: Mandailing Ethnic Group in Indonesia and Malaysia Since the 19th Century

Muhammad Rifqi Irsyad

Universitas Gadjah Mada
Jl. Bulaksumur, Kec. Depok, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia
e-mail: muhammadrifqiirsyad@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract: In the mid-19th century, a significant number of Mandailing ethnic groups migrated to Malaysia. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the factors of Mandailing migration to Malaysia and examine how the decision to migrate impacted social identity development. A comparison was also made with social identity of Mandailing ethnic group in Indonesia. This study was based entirely on secondary data from books and scientific articles. The results showed significant differences in the development of Mandailing ethnic social identity in Indonesia and Malaysia, particularly in relation to the definition of ethnicity and various cultural aspects. These differences became more pronounced with the strengthening of the Dutch and British colonial powers, with each adopting different policies toward the indigenous population. Regarding ethnicity, the policies continued largely unchanged after both countries gained independence albeit for slightly different reasons. More recently, after the 1990s, there has been a significant strengthening of ethnic awareness and the consolidation of several aspects of Mandailing ethnic social identity on both sides of Malacca Strait. It remains to be seen how this identity and cultural awakening is going to unfold in the future.

Keywords: Mandailing, ethnicity, social identity, Indonesia, Malaysia

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Introduction

The *Kakawin Negarakertagama* manuscript is the oldest known text that mentions ‘Mandailing.’ This manuscript, written by Empu Prapanca in the mid-14th century, records various wars and territorial expansions carried out by Majapahit Kingdom in regions outside Java. Majapahit’s expansion in the mid-14th century reached several areas of Sumatra, including Palembang, Jambil, Dharmasraya, Minangkabau, Siak, Panai, Kampar, Haru, and Mandailing. Mandailing is a gold-rich region that has attracted the attention of great powers throughout history.¹

In addition to the *Kakawin Negarakertagama* manuscript, the term “Mandailing” also appears in *Tonggo-tonggo Si Boru Deak Parujar*. *Tonggo-tonggo* is a prayer of praise passed down through Batak ethnic mythology. Because it is mythological, the precise production period of *Tonggo-tonggo* cannot be determined, nor is it clear whether it was created by a poet or derived from the spiritual realm. Likewise, *Tonggo-tonggo Si Boru Deak Parujar* “clearly states that the land of Mandailing is a place of stairs to the top (heaven) and the place where the Gods (*Debata Nan Tiga*) descend to the central continent (earth).” According to the construction of *Tonggo-tonggo*, the land of Mandailing is considered the starting point of Batak history, from which the area around Lake Toba later developed.² The traditional spiritual beliefs of Toba Batak people are still preserved in the form of the *Ugamo Malim* belief system, with a significant number of adherents scattered throughout Indonesia.³

Mandailing people have a tradition of migration, similar to Minangkabau ethnic group, although with different objectives and missions.⁴ It is important to note that Minangkabau is a neighboring ethnic group to Mandailing, and their people have had a strong historical relationship. Mandailing people do not migrate solely as individuals, but often migrate in groups led

by village leaders, with a complete sociopolitical structure. Village leaders move people for a better life, and in these cases, it is essentially the village (*huta*) migrating with a distinct sociopolitical structure. Therefore, the lives of people can be organized in a new place like Malaysia, as performed in Mandailing. In Malaysia, Kelang region was the initial destination for Mandailing migration. Around 1840, Mandailing population in Kelang had grown significantly, becoming a significant contributing ethnic group. Many early-generation Mandailing migrants worked as miners, traders, soldiers, and political and economic intermediaries.⁵

In the long history of Mandailing ethnic group, the most significant migration period occurred as a result of the attack by Padri troops from Minangkabau area in 1820. The arrival of Padri radically altered all aspects of traditional Mandailing life. As is well-known, Padri introduced and, on certain occasions, forced the adoption of a radical Islamic ideology based on *Wahabiyah*, imported from *Hijaz*.⁶ Although some Mandailing people accepted the arrival of Padri, others opposed and invited the Dutch to help free Mandailing land from Padri troops. Therefore, Padri War had complex consequences for Mandailing Land: 1) the introduction of Islam, which became a fundamental part of Mandailing ethnic identity; 2) it served as a bridge for the Dutch to enter Mandailing Land to fight Padri and at the same time took the area under colonial control; and 3) it led to social chaos, prompting even more Mandailing people to migrate to Malaysia and other areas, such as the east coast of Sumatra. In essence, Padri War was a key factor in Islamization but also in the increased presence of Mandailing ethnic groups in Peninsula Malaysia.⁷ More detailed accounts of Padri War can be found in various sources, including the works of Harahap,⁸ Dobbin,⁹ and Parlindungan.¹⁰

The main purpose of Mandailing ethnic group's migration

varied depending on the target area or objective. Usman Pelly's study concluded that migration of Mandailing people to East Sumatra was driven by a desire to expand their territory of power or influence, specifically in the context of competition with other ethnic groups. In East Sumatra, Mandailing succeeded in adapting and assimilating with Malays for several reasons: 1) the Malays and the Mandailings shared the same religion; 2) the Mandailing people were relatively well educated and therefore highly demanded; and 3) there was less competition from other ethnic groups, such as Karo, Simalungun, and Toba who are mostly of Christian faith.¹¹ In the Malaysian peninsula Mandailing ethnic group assimilated with Malays even at a deeper level.¹² Apparently the migrations of Mandailing people were successful. An estimate indicates that by 1930 over one third of Mandailings lived outside of their homeland, mostly being in the eastern coast of Sumatra. Although their number were relatively small compared to other ethnic group, the Mandailings were very contributive to cultural live of the region.¹³

This study examined the identity of Mandailing ethnic group, occupying the geographical region along the west coast of Sumatra Island, bordering the province of West Sumatra. In the current government administration, this area is part of Mandailing Natal Regency, resulting from the division of South Tapanuli in 1999. The discussion of Mandailing is relevant in the context of the historical and academic disparity between studies focused on the west coast and the east coast of Sumatra Island.¹⁴ This study also compared social identity development of Mandailing ethnic group who migrated to Malay Peninsula with those who remained in their hometown, Mandailing land, or North Sumatra more broadly. The choice of this identity comparison was inspired by the comparison of Malay identities conducted by Fee.¹⁵ The discussion focused on three aspects of social identity, namely ethnicity, culture, and religiosity. These

aspects will be compared in terms of development in Indonesia and Malaysia from the mid-19th century to the present. The study was also expected to contribute to strengthening the national, ethnic, and regional identities of Mandailing ethnic group in the context of both Indonesia and Malaysia. Previous studies have found that examining historical developments can significantly contribute to this process.¹⁶ Furthermore, social identity plays a crucial role in strengthening communal bonds and contributing significantly in facing life's challenges, even during crisis.¹⁷

Metdhod

This study used a social-historical method, which focused on the dynamics of social identity of Mandailing ethnic group from the 19th to 21st centuries, in two different spatial contexts, namely Indonesia and Malaysia. It was limited to three primary questions, namely: How is Mandailing ethnicity defined in the context of Indonesian and Malaysian history?; How is the manifestation of Mandailing customs expressed in the two different spatial contexts?; and How has Islamic identity of Mandailing ethnic group developed in the two contexts? In principle, this study was in line with Fee,¹⁸ Lubis,¹⁹ and Perret,²⁰ necessitating a comparative method. The development of social identity of Mandailing ethnic group in the two spatial contexts is primarily analyzed against the backdrop of the population policies of the Dutch and British colonial powers, as well as subsequent policies after the independence of Indonesia and Malaysia. Data were obtained from secondary sources, including books or scientific articles that discussed social identity of Mandailing ethnic group in Indonesia and Malaysia. Moreover, data were analyzed loosely using content analysis.²¹

Result and Discussion

Before delving into the dynamics of Mandailing ethnic group's social identity in Indonesia and Malaysia, this study will first provide a brief overview of Mandailing ethnic group's background from a spatial perspective, including its kinship and social system.

Mandailing as Geography and Ethnicity

The *Kakawin Negarakertagama* manuscript is the oldest known text to mention 'Mandailing'. This mid-14th century work, written by Empu Prapanca, is a record of various wars and territorial expansions carried out by Majapahit Kingdom, both within and outside Java. Majapahit's expansion in the mid-14th century reached several regions of Sumatra, including Palembang, Jambi, Dharmasraya, Minangkabau, Siak, Panai, Kampar, Haru, and Mandailing. Mandailing, being a gold-rich region, has historically attracted the attention of great powers. In addition to the *Kakawin Negarakertagama* manuscript, the term "Mandailing" also appears in Batak *Tonggo-tonggo*. *Tonggo-tonggo* is prayer passed down through generations in Batak ethnic mythology. Because of the mythological nature, the exact production period of *Tonggo-tonggo* cannot be precisely determined, and it is unclear whether they were created by a poet or originated from the spiritual realm. Batak *Tonggo-tonggo* is relevant because they state that Mandailing land is the place where one ascends to the heavenly realm, and where the Gods descend to earth.²² The traditional beliefs of Toba Batak people are still preserved, with the most formal and organized form being *Ugamo Malim* (*Parmalim*), which has a fairly significant number of adherents.²³

Mandailing ethnic group is often considered a sub-ethnic group of Batak. This classification is often found in the works of Western linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, or historians,

as reflected in subsequent studies. However, this view warrants reconsideration. As mentioned earlier, Batak *Tonggo-tonggo* state that Mandailing is the point of ascent and descent of the Gods to heaven. Abdur-Razak Lubis, a Malaysian Mandailing study expert, has long proposed new theses and arguments to challenge this perspective. In this context, the term “Mandailing” is more related to Minangkabau linguistically and spatially, when compared to its relationship with Toba, the geographical and cultural center of Toba Batak ethnic group. Interestingly, there is a place in Minangkabau with a name similar to Mandailing. Lubis also cited a historical event in Sungai Mati Medan in 1923. During the event, Mandailing ethnic group, which had settled in Medan, filed a petition through the Dutch colonial government court. The people aimed to have their ethnic identity clearly distinguished from Batak ethnic group in the population classification. Colonial government treated Mandailing as a sub-ethnic group of Batak, refer to the people as ‘Batak Mandailing’ in the population classification. After going through an appeal process, petition was finally approved by the highest court, Rad van Justitie, ruling that Mandailing were a separate ethnic group, not a sub-ethnic group of Batak. However, the Dutch government continued to include the group as Batak in the population census.²⁴ Apart from challenging the idea via court Mandailing community also took a more cultural and popular action by publishing a newspaper called *Mandailing*. The newspaper basic mission was defending the very idea of Mandailing being an independent ethnic group separate from Batak. Abdullah Lubis—a prominent press personality of the time and a Mandiling by ethnicity—founded the newspaper and acted as its editor. However, *Mandailing* did not survive for too long due to management issues.²⁵

This treatment tended to persist after Indonesian independence. In an analysis of the 2010 population census result, Mandailing

was not listed as an independent ethnic group but was still categorized under Batak.²⁶ Furthermore, Lubis shows that in Malay-language sources in Malaysia, Mandailing is treated as a separate ethnic group, entirely distinct from Batak ethnicity. Most Mandailing people do not consider themselves part of Toba Batak ethnic group despite the ongoing confusion about the origin of Mandailing ethnic group. Instead, Mandailings tend to regard themselves as an independent ethnic group. This seems to be related to Batak's reflection of a degradative nuance historically and culturally.²⁷ In Mandailing ethnic group, there are eight major clans, namely Lubis, Nasution, Barubara, Rangkuti, Parinduri, Daulae, Matondang, and Pulungan.²⁸ Geographically, the group is primarily concentrated in the southern part of North Sumatra province, specifically in Mandailing Natal regency and the southern part of South Tapanuli regency. The area is mostly part of Bukit Barisan Mountains, with the remainder on the west coast of Sumatra Island. During the Dutch colonial administration, Mandailing land was included in Tapanuli residency.²⁹ However, Mandailing ethnic group is also found in significant numbers in neighboring regencies, such as South Padang Lawas, North Padang Lawas, and West Pasaman. In general, Mandailing ethnic group in this region still inhabits the traditional Mandailing area. Known for migratory habits, the people are also found in significant numbers in East Sumatra and Malay Peninsula.³⁰

Kinship and Social System: *Dalihan Na Tolu* and *Huta*

Mandailing ethnic kinship system is summarized in the term '*dalihan na tolu*', meaning 'three stoves'. This term refers to the stove used as a stand for cooking utensils such as pots or cauldrons. In the kinship system, *dalihan na tolu* refers to how Mandailing people organize kinship system into three complementary elements. These elements are interrelated in a certain way to create order and harmony,³¹ listed below:

First, *kahanggi* refers to a group of relatives from one clan. Other terms related to *kahanggi* relatives include *sa ama saina*, *marakang maranggi*, *sa ama saoppu*, *saparamaan*, *saparompuan*, *sabona* or *sahaturan*. *Kahanggi* and *kahanggi pareban* of the customary court are in one camp, one group of relatives of the customary court. This *pareban* is called *hombar suhut* when belonging to different clans. *Kahanggi* or *suhut* is a group from the same clan or those with the same lineage in one *huta* (village) who are *bona bulu* (founders of the village).

Second, *anak boru* is a family group that takes wives from *mora* relatives. In general, it includes the entire family of a *suhut*'s sister. In Mandailing tradition, ideally, a son takes a wife from the mother's brother's (uncle) family.

Third, *mora* or *hulahula* is a group of relatives who give *boru* to be married as a wife by *anak boru* or *mora*, a family level where a *suhut* takes *boru* (wife). In general, *mora* can be applied to the entire extended family of the wife.³²

The principle of *dalihan na tolu* can be illustrated as follows: A family consists of a husband with the surname Nasution and a wife with the surname Lubis. Since Mandailing people are patrilineal, all the children in the family also bear the surname Nasution. In this context, the *kahanggi* group refers to those who share the same Nasution surname. The *anak boru* are the men (and their extended families) who marry daughters from the Nasution household, such as an individual with the surname Rangkuti. Meanwhile, the *mora* are the families from whom the Nasution son takes a wife. According to traditional values, the son is expected to marry a woman from the mother's family, meaning an individual with the surname Lubis. Therefore, the Lubis family group holds the status of *mora* in the context of this family relationship.

Traditionally, Mandailing indigenous people are grouped into *huta* (villages). *Huta* can be a small settlement with only dozens of families but can also grow larger. The founder of the village (*si pukka huta*) naturally becomes a leader called *raja* (king). *Huta* develops through population growth in *daliha na tolu* structure previously mentioned. Several *huta* can form a joint agreement—a kind of federation—to improve the economy, power, and defense. In this situation, the *raja* with the largest population and considered the most authoritative is agreed to become the *raja panusunan bulung*—perhaps identical to the head of a small-scale federal government. The *raja* in Mandailing is addressed with the great title “*Na Mora*”, meaning His Majesty. Decision-making in *huta* is carried out in a deliberation (*partahian*) involving the king and a group of village elders, usually called *Na Toras*, meaning The Old, The Strong, and (implicitly) The Experienced and Wise one. The concept of “*toras*” refers to several types of forest wood known for longevity. At a certain age, the wood produces a super-hardcore in the middle, locally called “*toras*.” The philosophy is that, because of age and experience, the group of elders is a power and the backbone of the village involved when making important decisions. In Mandailing culture, age is seen as strength wrapped in wisdom. *Raja Na Mora* resides in the *bagas godang* (palace), while deliberations are carried out in the deliberation hall called *sopo godang*.³³

Dynamics of Mandailing Ethnic Identity: Indonesia Definition of Ethnicity

As previously explained, based on the oldest references, such as the *Kakawin Negarakertagama* and *Tonggo-tonggo* (prayers in Batak mythology), Mandailing is the name for a geographical unit and an independent ethnic group that occupies Bukit Barisan Mountains extending toward the west coast of Sumatra

Island³⁴ In subsequent developments, historical differences in defining the ethnicity of Mandailing people have occurred in Indonesia and Malaysia.

With the entry of Western nations, specifically the Dutch, into Toba and Mandailing regions, a substantial shift occurred in the definition. Western study experts included Mandailing as one of the branches of Batak (as with Dairi, Karo, Fakfak, or Simalungun). Therefore, in modern discourse, specifically in Western tradition, Mandailing ethnic group became known as 'Batak Mandailing'³⁵ This Western-style discourse became dominant and was made permanent by the Dutch colonial government in its population policies. Mandailing people had long wanted to be recognized as an independent ethnic group. For example, in 1923, Mandailing people in Medan petitioned the Dutch Colonial Court to be distinguished from Batak as an independent ethnic group. After going through an appeal process, the petition was finally approved by the highest court, the Raad van Justitie. However, colonial government still included the people as Batak in the population census.³⁶ Due to the strong influence of the Dutch in the legal field, such treatment continued after Indonesian independence. In the result analysis of the 2010 population census, Mandailing was still included in Batak category.³⁷

Social System

Mandailing ethnic group has developed a mechanism for managing power and justice that has been applied across generations. When simplified, power is in the hands of the king, who usually owns the land. The king resides among the people in a palace called *bagas godang* (big house), and the status as king is called *hamoraon*, with the individual referred to as *na mora* (your majesty). Mandailing people make agreements to make important decisions, and the justice carried out by a group of elders is

called *na toras*. The agreement is carried out in a building called *sopo godang* (a big hall). Although the traditional functions are no longer carried out, *bagas godang* and *sopo godang* are still easy to find in Mandailing, such as in *Panyabungan Tonga* or *Huta Siantar*.

Mandailing culture of the governance and deliberation was influenced and made less effective by the conquest of Mandailing by Padri power and subsequently by the Dutch in the early to mid-19th century. In the process of the struggle against the Dutch colonialism, Mandailing tribal identity was slowly replaced by a national identity. In other words, social and power systems are now perceived as part of a larger unit, of which Mandailing is a part. In this process, two currents of change took place simultaneously: on the one hand, there was a loss of the real function of *na mora na toras*, *bagas godang*, and *sopo godang*; on the other hand, the aspirations of Mandailing people were absorbed into a higher level, namely nationalism.³⁸

Kinship and Marriage

The basic norm in selecting a partner in Mandailing ethnic group is that a man takes a wife from the mother's family and may not take a partner from the same clan. Marriage in the same clan is taboo in Mandailing tradition. More specifically, those who are prohibited from marrying in the tradition include: a) siblings (from the same father and mother); b) people with the same clan; c) cousins from the mother's side, as long as the mother is still alive; d) children of siblings; e) children of sisters; f) children of cousins from the father's side; and g) children of cousins from the mother's side.³⁹ The prohibition is intended to 1) maintain the kinship structure, 2) preserve speech or calls based on the *dalihan na tolu* structure, and 3) avoid the dangers of inbreeding.⁴⁰ Violating the taboo of marriage in the same

clan has consequences or punishments, ranging from expulsion from the village, atonement through fines, to adopting a new clan.⁴¹ In reality, the taboo against marriage in the same clan has been intensely weakened due to several factors: 1) weakening knowledge about Mandailing marriage customs; 2) the influence of Islamic law, which differs in terms of who can marry whom; 3) increasing education among Mandailing ethnic group, leading to a more critical thinking about customs; 4) the influence of globalization and modernization, introducing new cultures and values; and 5) migration of Mandailing ethnic group out of their traditional area, requiring cultural adaptations regarding marriage customs.⁴²

Use of Regional Languages

The use of Mandailing regional language is still very strong in Mandailing area and the wider South Tapanuli due to ethnic uniformity. However, Mandailing people who migrate tend to lose regional language when interacting with other ethnic groups. Those who migrate to bordering areas, such as Angkola and Padang Bolak generally continue to use Mandailing language. Mandailing language in these regions experiences slight differences in vocabulary, rhythm, and emphasis. The general impression is that Mandailing language in its original village is more refined and softer compared to the diaspora. Mandailing ethnic group who migrates to a different cultural system—such as to Malay cultural realm on the east coast of Sumatra—generally loses the ability to speak Mandailing in one or two generations. The shift to the local language (Malay) tends to be part of the adaptation for success in life. This is an integral part of the cultural mission of Mandailing migrants.⁴³

Inclusion of Clan Identity

Based on discussions, the primary clans of Mandailing ethnic group are Lubis, Nasution, Barubara, Rangkuti, Parinduri, Daulay, Matondang, and Pulungan.⁴⁴ Typically, clans are included at the end of a person's name as an identity that functions in customary relations and interactions. Clans have a special meaning as a personal identity and also play a role in organizing social relations.⁴⁵ The inclusion of clans is still very strong for Mandailing ethnic group living in Mandailing land, but it has undergone adjustments due to migration. For Mandailing ethnic group who migrates, for example, to East Sumatra, the inclusion of clans weakens to strengthen adaptation and success in migration. In the past, it also reinforced Batak 'identity', which had a degradative nuance⁴⁶ and was generally avoided by Mandailing migrants. The choice to include or exclude the clan does not follow a similar set pattern. Some Mandailing migrants are popular with their clans, such as Muhamad Arsyad Thalib Lubis and Abdullah Lubis. Others, like Abu Bakar Ya'kub, a cleric-poet, or Abdurrahman Syihab, a prominent religious scholar, do not include their clan. They were in fact from the house of Nasution and Rangkuti clan respectively.

Religiosity

Mandiling ethnic group began to embrace Islam through Islamic propaganda carried out by Padri troops who came to conquer Mandailing in the early 19th century. As mentioned, the radical method adopted by Padri led to an exodus of people from Mandailing region to Malaysia. Mandailing people in their homeland, or East Sumatra, are generally known for their strong Islamic identity and have contributed significantly to the region's Islamic history. For example, the strength of the relationship with Islam is reflected in the closeness of Mandailing customs to Islamic principles. This is expressed in the motto '*Hombar doi adat dohot ugamo*' or 'Customs stand side by side with religion'.

At the sociological level, Mandailing ethnic group is viewed as a barrier to the rate of Christianization centered in Toba and fully supported by Western powers. Mandailing region is one of the focal points for Islamic boarding schools in North Sumatra, producing many ulema.⁴⁷ The oldest Islamic boarding school in North Sumatra is located in Purba Baru, Mandailing, founded by Sheikh Musthafa Husein Nasution.⁴⁸ Mandailing land is also known as a source of ulema for North Sumatra. Mandailing ulema have made significant contributions to various fields of life, covering religion, education, intellectual endeavors, publications, social matters, and politics at the local, national, and international levels.⁴⁹

Dynamics of Mandailing Ethnic Identity: Malaysia Definition of Ethnicity

Mandailing migrants in Malay Peninsula experienced a process of defining ethnicity that differed from the experience of their counterparts in Indonesia. Since the early days of migration in the mid-19th century, Mandailing people (often written as *Mendeleng*) were considered an independent ethnic group. In the population classification, British colonial government in Malaysia also treated Mandailing people as a separate ethnic group. However, out of respect for Malay kingdoms, Mandailing people were later 'Malayized'. In British colonial documents, Mandailing people were referred to as 'Immigrant Malays', and was also the term 'Malays based on Race'. Over time, the word 'Mandailing' disappeared, and Mandailing ethnic group was considered entirely Malay. After independence, this policy continued, and to the present day, people of Mandailing descent are fully regarded as part of Malay tribe.⁵⁰

Social System

During the early migration to Malay Peninsula, Mandailing people managed social system based on old traditions, such as *na mora-na toras*, and implemented it in *bagas godang-sopo godang*. Similar to the experience in Indonesia, the presence of Britain as colonial power in Malay Peninsula gradually altered the socio-political system. British domination transformed social structure to resemble European practices. As immigrants and minorities, Mandailing people in Malaysia had to relinquish their culture and social system, adapting to the pressures of both the Western colonial system on one side and the local Malay order as the host on the other. However, *bagas godang* and *sopo godang* can still be found in Perak as witnesses to the history of Mandailing culture. As in Indonesia, Mandailing people of Malaysia were absorbed into nationalist aspirations aimed at independence from Western colonialism, significantly weakening social identity.⁵¹ They completely assimilate into modern Malaysian social system.

Kinship and Marriage

By becoming completely Malay, Mandailing people in Malaysia no longer recognize marriage system based on Mandailing customs. This leads to full adherence to local Malay-Islamic practices.⁵² Based on discussions, the influence of Islamic teachings is an essential factor in weakening the taboo against marriage in the same clan among Mandailing people. While in Indonesia the practice is weakening,⁵³ in Malaysia it has been disappeared completely.

Use of Regional Language and Clan Identity

After being fully absorbed into Malay and Malaysian, Mandailing language and culture were forgotten. A similar assimilation process

also occurred for Mandailing people who migrated to the east coast of Sumatra. The people also became Malay, neglecting Mandailing culture by not using clan identity in names. In terms of name conventions, Mandailing people were absorbed into the local tradition by including the father's name after a person's name, either by using the word '*bin*' (=son of) or not. In recent years, however, some prominent Malaysian Mandailings have been popular with their clan name; such is the case with Saifuddin Nasution one of minister under the current Prime Minister Datuk Anwar Ibrahim.⁵⁴ On the other hand, another minister of the same administration, Dato' Seri Ahmad Faizal, is also known to carry Mandailing blood without being appear in his formal name.⁵⁵

Religiosity

In Malaysia, Islamic identity of Mandailing people blends perfectly with Islamic Kingdom system, which later formed Malaysian Federation. Here Mandailing people in have completely merged with Malays profess and follow the same Islamic interpretation (*mazhab*) as the one endorsed by the government. They also enthusiastically follow all local Malay religious customary practices. Above, it had been stated that culturally the word Malay and Islam often used interchangeably, due to the complete absorption of Islam by Malays. As such anyone converted to Islam would be considered Malay regardless of ethnicity.⁵⁶

For simplicity, the differences in the development of social identity of Mandailing ethnic group in Indonesia and Malaysia are presented below.

Table 1
Comparison of Social Identity of Mandailing Ethnic Group in Indonesia and Malaysia

No	Social Identity Aspects	Indonesia	Malaysia
1.	Definition of Ethnicity	Based on the census policy of the Dutch colonial government, Mandailing was considered a sub-Batak (Batak-Mandailing).	According to British colonial government policy, Mandailing was considered "Immigrant Malays," later 'Racially Malays,' and eventually fully 'Malays.'
2.	Social System	Runs normatively in Mandailing-Natal; experienced changes in line with independence and the construction of a national political system.	Completely lost; Mandailing society integrated into Malaysian Kingdom system.
3.	Kinship and Marriage	Implemented partially, especially in Mandailing-Natal region. Weakened due to the influence of Islam and migration.	Not implemented.
4.	Use of Regional Languages	Used extensively in Mandailing-Natal; weakened due to migration.	Not used.
5.	Use of Clan Identity	Used generally in Mandailing-Natal. There is a new awareness among migrants.	Not used, except in very minor cases.
6.	Religiosity	Sunni Muslims; known as a religious society.	Sunni Muslims; known as a religious society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, migration wave in the early 19th century brought a significant number of Mandailing ethnic groups across Malacca Straits to Malay Peninsula. They settled and developed in this region, adapting and becoming integral to contemporary Malaysia. Social identity of Mandailing ethnic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia grew and developed in their

respective contexts strongly influenced by the population policies of the Dutch and British colonialists. The differences in population policies of the Dutch and British colonial governments toward Mandailing ethnic group led to substantive differences in the ethnic status of Mandailing. Meanwhile, there was still a long-standing debate in Indonesia, as Mandailing people in Malaysia had become fully Malay. In both Indonesia and Malaysia, the traditional Mandailing social system weakened along with the rise of nationalism and the establishment of post-colonial nation-states. The difference was that Indonesia had a sort of protected area for Mandailing culture in the form of Mandailing Natal Regency. In its original area—Mandailing Natal—some aspects of the culture still survived, while certain other parts were in the process of being lost. In the 1980s, a strong awareness emerged among Mandailing people to strengthen their social identity. This revival took place simultaneously on both sides of Malacca Strait by establishing organizations and research institutions. *Gordang Sambilan* was re-introduced intensively as a symbol of the revival of Mandailing culture since the 1990s. This revival was clearly very relevant because social identity was directly related to the bargaining power of Mandailing ethnic group in political, social, economic, and other matters. The desire to revitalize Mandailing culture grew in both countries, although Indonesia clearly had an advantage due to its more solid demographic and social capital. In the future, relations between Mandailing people on both sides of Malacca Strait would continue to improve.

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