

Acculturation of Islam and the Sinamot Tradition: Marriage Dynamics of the Angkola Batak Community 1980-2023

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Abstract: Islamisation in the Indonesian archipelago has been ongoing for centuries. Islam emerged as an influential force in the history of the archipelago. The entry of Islam into Indonesia, a country diverse in culture, led to culture and religion being closely linked. In the Angkola Batak tradition, ancestors' teachings remained embedded in everyday life until after the arrival of Islam, when acculturation and interrelationships took place between Islamic culture and religion. This study uses a qualitative research method, with a library research approach focusing on the acculturation of *Sinamot* (dowry) culture in the Batak Angkola community of South Tapanuli. The study findings cover three aspects of the topic. First, the social condition of the Angkola Batak community, which adheres to *the dalihan na tolu* social structure as a benchmark for communicating, acting, and resolving social problems. Second, the interrelationship between customs and Islam in the *Sinamot* tradition (one of the series in Angkola Batak marriages) in determining the amount of *Sinamot* is attended by the nuclear family from both parties to resolve the specified amount. Finally, it was discovered that there were changes in the banquets in the deliberation, such as abandoning forms prohibited in Islamic teachings, such as those involving the consumption of pork and palm wine, and also changes in the *Sinamot* tradition in the marriages of the Angkola Batak community due to several factors, including changes resulting from the move from traditional to modern times, and the wishes of the Batak Angkola community to familiarise themselves with and keep up with the times. The introduction of Islam provided a systematic and logical variation, allowing society to easily accept it at wedding ceremonies.

Keywords: Islam acculturation, sinamot tradition, marriage ceremony, batak angkola

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A. Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in culture and tradition, including its marriage system. Each region has its own customs and rules regarding marriage, which reflect the values and beliefs of the local community. These customary marriage systems not only have religious and spiritual significance, but also important social and economic functions. Many studies have been conducted to examine customary marriage systems in various regions in Indonesia. These have included, for example, an analysis of the matrilineal marriage system in Minangkabau society, including the marriage procession, the role of the family, and the rights of married couples (Sumanto, 2018; Suryani, 2019). Furthermore, in Bugis-Makassar customary marriages, the system is patrilineal, a process in which the man takes the woman from the woman's family to enter male kinship and relinquishes his customary position in his father's kinship structure. As previously discussed by researchers, the Bugis customary marriage system in the context of modernity, including the challenges and efforts to preserve it, has become an integral part of Bugis culture (Ashari, 2016; Jafar, 2017; Fitriana, 2020). In contrast, the Jambi customary marriage system can be categorized as a matrilineal system influenced by the parental system (Sudrajat, n.d.; Ali & Puspita, 2022; Arzam et al., 2023). Furthermore, the Toba Batak marriage tradition regarding its meaning and implementation, including the symbolic meaning in the marriage procession and its influence on the social life of the community (Wirman & Sidabutar, 2015; Novelita et al., 2019; Pasaribu & Sukirno, 2017).

Finally, the Angkola Batak customary marriage system has different characteristics from those of other regions in Indonesia, including that of the Toba Batak. One such characteristic is the parental kinship system, in which lineage and inheritance are passed on to sons and daughters equally (Harahap, 2016). In addition, marriage for the Angkola Batak people involves various unique systems, including introductions and marriage ceremonies; even after marriage, many customs must be adhered to. Angkola Batak marriages have their characteristics, both pre-and post. This ethnic group has rites and rituals such as *Mangupa*, *Tuor*, *Manortor*, and other customs, which they still adhere to.

The majority of the Angkola Batak people are Muslim, whose way of thinking is formed by Islamic reality. Ceremony and marriage have developed an interrelation between culture and religion since then. Wrong, a series of ceremonies in Angkola Batak community weddings is the *Sinamot* (dowry) system.

Sinamot is a principle that must be adhered to and cannot be omitted from the marriage procession of the Angkola Batak community, being a legal obligation; its principles were first published in written form in 1980. The tradition began in connection with the Angkola Batak tribe, who used to live in the village (*Bona Pasogit*) and work as farmers (*Mangula*) (Situmeang, 2007).

Typically, women perform most of the tasks as farmers in the rice fields. When a woman decides to marry, she will naturally follow her husband, giving her family the impression that she is working harder in the fields because there are fewer workers now that her children have left home. In this situation, the father must offer a woman or man (the phrase refers to a person someone replaces) to take the place of his child. Giving *sinamot* can be in the form of essential goods, such as agricultural or livestock products such as buffalo, cows, and pigs. The amount depends on the man's desire and ability or the woman's desire. However, the idea of *sinamot* has evolved, and now may be presented in cash. In today's society, most jobs are no longer in farming or animal husbandry, with people instead becoming doctors, civil servants, military personnel, police or businesspeople. Moreover, there has been a change in the tradition of *sinamot*, with it being given to parents, father's brothers, brothers, children of the bride's aunt, and guests from the woman's family (Perkasa Alam & Zaenal, 2017). The delivery of *sinamot* has now changed it is given directly by the man to the prospective bride without intermediaries.

As for other changes, the level of *sinamot* is determined by both parties through traditional deliberations (*marhata*). In this process, a meal is served as fish a risk, free-range chicken curry, pork, coffee, milk, and palm wine, among others. (Perkasa Alam & Zaenal, 2017). After Islam dominated the Angkola Batak community, the meals served previously changed; for example, the elimination of pork and palm wine because they were against Islam.

In some Batak traditional marriages, *sinamot* is a prerequisite that is usually given and cannot be removed. This can cancel the marriage because it does not match the expected amount of *Sinamot*. As a result, families are selective in finding companions for their children. It is not surprising that many families choose girls for their children from foreign ethnic groups because *Sinamot* cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, young people looking for a partner prefer ones from other ethnic groups to avoid the *Sinamot* tradition.

This article focuses on changes in the *Sinamot* tradition in the Angkola Batak (South Tapanuli), North Sumatra. It will discuss the types of change in the tradition and the interrelation between Islam and Angkola Batak culture, which complement

each other. Batak customs were previously synonymous with paganism, as seen in the people's strong belief in spirits. However, the influence of Islam is significant for the Angkola Batak people, so this belief is slowly being eroded.

As a result of the above, the researcher decided to conduct additional research entitled *Acculturation of Islam and the Sinamot Tradition: Marriage Dynamics of the Angkola Batak Community 1980-2023*. The starting point was 1980, as the signs of change first occurred during the New Order era, otherwise known as the development stage. 2023 was the final year covered by the research in its observation of the current change situation in the *Sinamot* tradition. The research is believed to be essential in the consideration of such traditions and their implications for the Angkola Batak community.

A literature review was conducted to identify previous research with similar study objects and to thus demonstrate the novelty of this research. The thesis by Harahap (2021) discusses the Angkola Batak wedding ceremony traditions from an Islamic legal perspective, and the shifts in religion and customs in the context of modernity in South Tapanuli. In addition, Pulungan (2018) discusses the role of the interaction process between traditional values and Islam in the Mandailing and Angkola communities of South Tapanuli, while Manik (2012) considers the meaning and function of the *Sinamot* tradition in the marriage customs of the Batak Toba tribe overseas in Surabaya. Nasution et al. (2022) focus on the acculturation of hadith with the traditions of the Angkola Batak community, and Firmando (2021) discusses social changes in traditional marriage ceremonies among the Toba Batak ethnic group in Northern Tapanuli.

The difference between previous research and this is that its focus is on changes in the *Sinamot* tradition due to the influence of Islamic acculturation on marriages in the Angkola Batak community, South Tapanuli. To provide boundaries for the study so that its scope was not too broad, several problem formulations were formulated, including the present state of the social condition of the Angkola Batak community; the form of the interrelation between established customs and Islam in changes to the *Sinamot* tradition; and why has there been a shift in the *Sinamot* tradition regarding marriages in the Angkola Batak community.

B. Methods

A qualitative approach is employed with the library research method, which collects data from various library sources, such as books, journals, articles, and other documents.

Primary and secondary data sources are utilized. Primary data are collected directly from the original source; in the context of this study, they included 1) direct interviews with members of the Angkola Batak community about marriage practices, their understanding of Islam, and social changes that have occurred over time; 2) direct observations of changes in *Sinamot* traditions and marriage practices in the community from 1980 to 2023; 3) survey conducted among community members to understand their views on acculturation between Islam and the *Sinamot* tradition in the context of marriage. On the other hand, secondary data have been collected by other parties and are reused for research analysis. In this study, the secondary data included 1) previous studies on marital dynamics and cultural acculturation in the Angkola Batak community; 2) relevant statistical data, such as the number of traditional versus Islamic marriages in the community, taken from sources such as church or government records; and 3) academic literature on the process of acculturation and cultural change in multicultural societies. By combining the two types of data, it was possible to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islam and the *Sinamot* tradition interacted in the context of marriage in the Angkola Batak community from 1980 to 2023. The approach also allowed the researchers to analyze long-term trends and patterns of social change in the marital dynamics of the communities. The data analysis technique used was thematic analysis, which is employed to analyze qualitative data by identifying themes that appear.

C. Results and Discussion

Sinamot as Local Culture

Culture is a characteristic that can help make people known to everyone inside and outside a country. Each ethnicity has its own culture, which thus makes it unique and valuable. Some ethnicities have many cultures, such as Indonesia, a country consisting of many islands and nations, with each nation having a culture unique to that region, often referred to as local culture. Such culture, which is full of meaning, can be traced to events passed down from generation to generation, which all have their own value. These values are institutionalized in a particular community group, giving birth to traditions. Traditions observed between generations become habits or are known as *adat*. Furthermore, institutionalized customs become part of the culture of a society. *Sinamot* is said to be a local culture because it has norms and values specific to the Angkola Batak ethnic group. The *Sinamot* provisions found amongst the Angkola Batak tribe are implemented continuously.

In the Batak Angkola tradition, as mentioned above, *Sinamot* is the equivalent of dowry in the Islamic concept, in the context of the Angkola Batak traditional wedding ceremony. It is a condition for the validity of a marriage and is a tradition that has been in existence for a long time. It started as a form of compensation for girls who had left their nuclear families because they were betrothed, thereby reducing their energy to help with work. On this basis, a man is obliged to compensate the woman's family. *Sinamot* can also be given through agricultural or livestock harvests (Ma Samuel Rt Simanjuntak et al., 2021).

Marhata Sinamot, also known as the dowry discussion, is a procession of male and female relatives who agree to the dowry. The planning discussed by the families of both parties is more critical than the price itself. *Marhata Sinamot*, which influences what will be performed at the traditional wedding ceremony, is considered by some to be the most significant event (Pardosi, 2008).

By debating the number of *ulos cloths* and types of *ulos cloths* that men should bring, this discussion process is known as *mangarangrangi ulaon* (discussing events). It also includes the implementation of *paulek une* (a message indicating that the marriage ceremony has gone smoothly), including requirements such as giving goldfish. In addition, the main topic of conversation is the first wedding event and what details are needed regarding catering, the venue, and invitations. A meeting is scheduled to specifically discuss invitations and the number to be made. It is beneficial to review and confirm the amount of dowry that has been negotiated by the parents of the bride and groom to the *parhata* during *the marhusip*, or hidden conversation, in the context of Batak Angkola society (*marhata sinamot*).

The dowry agreed upon by both parties of the bride and groom will later be given in part at the dowry deliberation/ *marhata sinamot*, often referred to as the dowry down payment. The relatives will discuss this matter as the marriage of both parties is called *dalihan na tolu* (Manurung et al., 2019), with blood (lineal) relatives from both parties being called *suhi ampang na opat* (relatives by marriage).

However, there are some differences. For example, in Islam, a dowry is a gift from a prospective husband to his wife according to his capabilities. However, in Batak custom, Angkola is defined as *Sinamot*, which both parties determine in a customary deliberation (*Maharta*). This determination is made through a traditional deliberation procession (*Maharta*), which is attended by both the bride and groom, and the woman's and man's families. The amount of *Sinamot* is usually based on a person's social status, with women used as the benchmark. The stronger the woman's economic condition, the higher the *Sinamot gift*. Consequently, with this

condition, men often look for partners outside their area because of their inability to fulfill *Sinamot*. This has become a local culture that continues to be maintained (Alam & Zaenal, 2017).

Moreover, there are also interesting aspects of the determination of the amount of *Sinamot*, such as the serving of food in the form of chicken curry and pork, and drinks such as coffee and palm wine. Banquets during the determination of *Sinamot* contain components prohibited by Islam, namely pork and *palm wine*, although the prohibition on consuming these is clearly stated in the Koran as a primary reference source for followers of Islam.

Process of Acculturation of Angkola Batak Culture

As stated, acculturation is a social condition that arises when a group of people with a particular culture faces elements of a new culture, which must be slowly accepted and processed into their own culture without eliminating it. Culture of origin.

Culture is a form of process and the result of all ethnic activities in the aesthetic and moral fields that occur through a process of historical conformity and influence. Religious issues are also a topic of discussion in the acculturation field. Religious systems experience development due to scientific advances. In ancient times, the very minimal human knowledge resulted in belief in the supernatural. The reality of acculturation is evident; for example, in trade or marriage. Every location has its own culture and customs, similar to the customs of a wedding procession. In short, the use of *Sinamot* in one of the traditional processions is known as dowry in Islam.

The existence of two things based on different grounds will give rise to intersections. This means that *Sinamot* is based on a tradition passed down from generation to generation and observed continuously with the concept of the dowry based on the provisions of the Koran. In principle, acculturation is a process of exchange and mutual influence between two or more cultures. The acculturation process can occur naturally, through direct contact between two cultures, or through the impact of mass media. The *Sinamot* tradition is a traditional wedding ritual of the Angkola Batak people. The tradition is characterized by ceremonies and rituals intended to strengthen the relationship between the bride's and groom's families.

Acculturation between *Sinamot* and Islamic culture came from direct contact between the Angkola Batak community and Islam. Islam entered Batak land in the 13th century, and since then it has become the majority religion in the region.

Acculturation between *Sinamot* and Islamic culture is therefore thought to have occurred since the 13th century. However, the acculturation process became more intense in the 20th century, in line with with the increasing awareness of the Batak people of Islamic teachings (Kurniawan, 2014).

Islamic penetration into Angkola Batak culture is a process of acculturation, seen from vertical and horizontal diversity. The sheer diversity in question concerns differences in social class and caste. On the other hand, horizontal diversity concerns differences in ethnicity, class, and religion. The process is centered on three aspects: first, the history of the spread of Islam in Padangsidempuan; second, the role of religious figures (male); and third, the agreement on values and the dominance of religion over culture. Through these three aspects, it can be seen what aspects of Angkola Batak culture have been influenced by Islamic law, working together in community life following the concept of *hombar adat dohot ibadat* (custom and religion living side by side) (Koentjoeraningrat, 2010).

The results of the acculturation between *Sinamot* and Islamic culture are evident in several aspects, including the simplification of rituals. *Sinamot* tradition involves complex and expensive rituals. However, as the influence of Islam increased, the *Sinamot* ritual became more straightforward and less costly. This was a result of Islamic teachings, which emphasize simplicity and avoiding waste. The second aspect is that of egalitarianism. The traditional *Sinamot* tradition emphasizes the social and economic status of the groom's family. However, as Islamic influence increased, *Sinamot* traditions became more egalitarian, again because of Islamic teachings, which emphasize gender equality and women's rights. The third aspect is the emphasis on education. *Sinamot* tradition emphasizes giving a dowry to the bride's family. However, along with the increasing influence of Islam, the *Sinamot* tradition began to emphasize the provision of education to the bride, as Islamic teachings stress the importance of education for women.

Acculturation between *Sinamot* and Islamic culture has positively changed this tradition. The changes have made *Sinamot* tradition simpler, more egalitarian, and more focused on education.

Acculturation of Angkola Batak Culture in Wedding Traditions

The mixing of two cultures ultimately leads to acculturation. Although there is also the possibility of assimilation, this article discusses the occurrence of acculturation, in this case, between *Sinamot*, the Batak Angkola traditional culture, and the dowry concept in Islamic understanding. Culture serves as a regulator so

that humans can act and determine their attitudes when interacting. Individual communities that give birth to customs have a culture, which society will make into a forum and support for customs. Culture has a significant function in humans and their development. Society and its members must face various conditions and threats, such as natural forces and other forces within society that are not always suitable and may even threaten to give rise to social change (Liliweri, 2005).

There are natural causes for any social change that takes place. These generally come from society itself, such as the rise or fall of a population in an area. These will then bring about changes in the social system, facilitating solid social change in communities or individuals in heterogeneous areas with various ethnicities. Because of the variety and number of struggles, this situation will provide an opportunity to socialize more widely and freely. In addition, different technological and scientific knowledge and customs become the impact of this change (Sahmin, 2014). This is similar to what occurred to the Angkola Batak indigenous community.

The Angkola Batak people have adhered to the *Sinamot* culture since before the arrival of Islam (Harahap, 2004). However, the presence of Islam contributed novelty to their community and culture. This can be seen in the marriage procession, which has become systematic, both in terms of belief in performing marriage ceremonies with the worship of spirits as protectors of danger during the event, which is no longer used (Siregar, 2018).

The Angkola Batak people are able to accept the existence of Islam, starting from their beliefs regarding religion. They believe in the supernatural, such as understanding religion by performing ritual practices against supernatural beings. They do this based on their awareness, and simultaneous belief that spirits can maintain and regulate, which humans cannot do entirely. Likewise, they understand something that is above human. Consequently, the presence of Islam can be easily accepted by changing their approach towards spirits to the worship of one God.

Islam brings visible harmonization to the Angkola Batak culture towards sacred traditions, forming the values of tolerance between communities. Moreover, Islam exists to link religion and culture; for example, from marriage proposals to weddings. Islam influences cultural values in marriage matters and the traditional practices of the Angkola Batak community (Alam & Zaenal, 2017).

In terms of utility, it is difficult for institutionalized traditions to keep pace with changes, especially in the presence of Islam. On the one hand, the desire to change Islamic values will make customs more orderly. Contrary to previous beliefs held by the Angkola Batak community, marriage will not be performed according to custom,

and it is considered invalid if the man does not agree to the specified *Sinamot*. This may hurt the younger generation and encourage infidelity because marriages require a large amount of capital. Through tradition, applying Islamic values will bring harmony between culture and religion, leading to a better order.

Table 1.

The Aspect of Cultural Change in Angkola Batak Tradition and Islamic Influence

Aspect	Angkola Batak Tradition	Islamic Influence
Sinamot Form and Value	<i>Sinamot</i> takes the form of valuable objects such as gold, silver, livestock and rice fields. The value of <i>sinamot</i> was determined by the social status and wealth of the man's family.	<i>Sinamot</i> can be money, electronics, or even property. The value of <i>sinamot</i> is more determined by agreement between both parties.
Role of Women	Women have a relatively passive role in marriage. They are the only objects that men fight over.	Women have the right to choose their partners and determine the value of <i>sinamot</i> .
Public Perception	The <i>sinamot</i> tradition is considered a symbol of social status and family wealth.	The <i>sinamot</i> tradition has a more diverse perception. Some still consider it necessary, while others also think it is a tradition that needs to be preserved.

As shown in table 1, three aspects need to be understood: the form and value of *sinamot*, the role of women, and the role of society.

Form and Value

In the past, *sinamot* took the form of valuable objects, such as gold, silver, livestock, and rice fields. This was because the *sinamot* tradition symbolizes social status and family wealth. However, over time, the form of the *sinamot* has changed. Today, it can be money, electronic goods, or even property. Economic and social factors influence this. The value of *sinamot* has also changed. In the past, its value was determined by the social status and wealth of the male family, as the tradition was considered a form of remuneration to women's families for the education and care they have given them (Naibaho et al., 2023). However, the value of *sinamot* is currently determined more by agreement between both parties, under the influence of religious factors and modernization. Islam teaches that marriage is a worship that is sunnah by Allah SWT. In Islam, marriage should not be conditional on the payment of an excessive dowry, as it is primarily an agreement between two parties, namely a man and a woman.

Role of Women

In the past, Angkola Batak women played a relatively passive role in marriage. Women were the only objects that men fought over. This was because women were considered property that must be guarded and protected by the family. Male dominance is more robust with the patrilineal kinship system of the Batak people (Siregar, 2015). This structure regulates all aspects of the Batak way of life, including inheritance, land ownership, marriage, religious worship, administration of justice, and settlements relating to the male lineage found in all Batak groups, including the Angkola Batak, whose society is predominantly Muslim (Nasution, 2023). However, nowadays, the role of women in marriage has increased. They have the right to choose their partners and participate in determining the value of *sinamot*, influenced by educational and religious factors. Islam teaches that women have the same rights as men, including in matters of marriage. For example, they have the right to choose their partner and participate in determining everything related to their marriage. As research by Nasution (2023) shows, a cultural shift related to wives working and helping the family economically has occurred. There has been an effort to adapt the patriarchal customs of the Angkola Batak to the phenomenon of modernity and gender equality, whereby Batak men invite women to earn a living together.

Public Perception

Previously, the Angkola Batak people perceived the *sinamot* tradition positively. It was considered a symbol of social status and family wealth. However, they now have a more diverse perception of the tradition. Some still believe the *sinamot* tradition is necessary, while others consider it one that does not need to be preserved (Sitorus et al., n.d.). This shift has been influenced by modernization factors, which have had a significant influence on the Angkola Batak community. Modernization has changed people's perspective on various aspects of life, including the *sinamot* tradition. Some argue that the tradition is one that is irrelevant to current developments and needs to be abandoned, while others believe that it should be preserved because of its positive values.

Therefore, the compatibility between Islamic culture and Angkola Batak culture intertwines these two aspects. Islam influences customs, and customs also affect religious communities. Amongst the changes born from the acculturation between Islam and Batak Angkola customs, the traditional procession continues to be performed. However, Islamic values still apply. For example, changes in the deliberation to determine *Sinamot* no longer include factors prohibited by Islam. *Sinamot* is still implemented in its essential form as a dowry in fulfilling the legal

requirements of marriage, and freedom is given in choosing a partner. Therefore, the acculturation problem causes changes in tradition in achieving conformity with the essence of the traditional marriage procession, while still applying Islamic values.

D. Conclusion

The *sinamot* given can be used to buy wedding party items such as *ulos*, fish, clothes, jewelry, and to cover other costs, which will also be distributed to relatives. Nowadays, *Sinamot* is always determined based on social status, educational level, and economic level. It has always been a measure of self-esteem for the family, especially that of the woman.

Sinamot continues to be practiced and given to women's parents as money or objects of value. As property is challenging to find, it can also be given in the form of cash. The money the man gives to the woman is used to pay for traditional wedding parties, such as buying *ulos*, *dengke* (goldfish), clothes, bridal jewelry, and expenses for going to the man's family's village to hold the wedding party.

The compatibility between Islamic and Angkola Batak cultures intertwines these two aspects. Islam influences customs, and customs also affect religious communities. The changes born from the acculturation between Islam and Batak Angkola customs continued to carry out the traditional procession. However, it also includes Islamic values. For example, changes in the deliberation to determine *Sinamot* no longer include items prohibited by Islam. *Sinamot* is still implemented as essentially a dowry in fulfilling the legal requirements of marriage, and freedom is given in choosing a partner so that the acculturation problem that occurs leads to changes in tradition to achieve conformity with the essence of the traditional marriage procession while still applying Islamic values.

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