

# SABAH'S HAKKA STORY

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# **Sabah's Hakka Story**

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## Positioning the Hakka Christians of Inanam-Menggatal-Telipok Area in the Context of 100 years of History: Between Commons and Exceptions

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### Introduction

When the 90 pioneers from 22 families arrived in Jesselton, they were confronted by a new environment that was unlike anything that they had seen before. The hot climate and the strange languages spoken in this new land and the thoughts of uncertainty made them very confused. From Jesselton, where they met some of their fellow Chinese and Hakkas, they were taken to their final destinations – Inanam and Menggatal. In spite of the uncertainties confronting them, these pioneers were able to rely on the assurance that the Church would be there to take care of them, and that they could rely on the Church for their future. Indeed, 100 years later, the Church is still there to provide solace and spiritual guidance to the descendants of the pioneers. Yet, amidst all this, many changes have taken place in both the environment in which they settled, as well as within the community itself. This paper will focus on these changes to see how they have transformed and shaped the Hakka Christian community from a rural-based community to that of an urbanized one. The role of the Basel Missionary Society and, later, the Borneo Basel Self-Established Church in shaping the community will be explored.

It must be stressed that in discussing the experience of the Hakka Christians of the three Basel churches of Inanam-Menggatal-Telipok, one should not do so in isolation. The fact, that the three churches are part of the larger Hakka Christian experience of the Basel Christian Church, and that they are also part of the Chinese experiences in Southeast Asia, must not be lost in the discussion. What would actually set the community apart from the rest of the Basel churches and the rest of the Chinese experiences are perhaps the exceptions