

## **Exclusion or Renunciation ? Identification of Plains Tribes and Mountain Compatriots**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There exist two opposing camps offering explanations for why most plains tribes were not granted official recognition of their tribal status. On the one hand, the exclusion camp argues that most plains tribes were left out in the identification of aboriginal status in the 1950s. On the other hand, the renunciation camp advocates that most plains tribes gave up being registered as aboriginals themselves. Nevertheless, contemporary aboriginal status follows completely the official identity granted during the 1950s. In view of the above controversy, this article seeks to clarify the contexts and the process of the official identification of tribal status.

Evidences from historical records indicate that *shanbao* were originally the Takasago aborigines and did not include the plains tribes. Nevertheless, the government had offered the plains tribes an opportunity to be registered as *pingdi shanbao*. During the census held in September 1956, more than 20,000 people responded that they were of the plains tribes but were subsequently absent from the registration of *pingdi shanbao* for reasons unknown. Perhaps, they were not informed of such registration or they did not identify themselves as Takasago aborigines. Nevertheless, failure to be registered as *pingdi shanbao* does not mean they lose their identity as aborigines. To resolve the controversy over their identity would require a broader framework than the current process for official recognition of aboriginal identity.

**Keywords:** Takasago, “*Shanbao* (Mountain Compatriots)”, “*Pingdi Shanbao* (Mountain Compatriots in Plain Area)”, Ethnic Identification, Census