

# RESULTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN THE TOBA BATAK PEOPLE, GERMAN MISSIONARIES, AND DUTCH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS: MUSICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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*This article aims to explain the socio-cultural and religious impact of 80 years contact between Toba Batak people of North Sumatra with the German missionaries of the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (RMG) from Wuppetal (Germany) and the Dutch colonial government (ca. 1860s- 1940s).<sup>1</sup> It also discusses the spread of Christianity, the development of the education, the economy and the technology in the post-colonial era (ca. 1950s -1990s). More specifically, it discusses the impact of the social transformations on the practice of *adat* (customary law) and the performance of the ceremonial music and dance, *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor* with special reference to the last two decades or so.*

## Introduction

This article aims to explain the socio-cultural and religious impact of 80 years contact between Toba Batak people of North Sumatra with the German missionaries of the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (RMG) from Wuppetal (Germany) and the Dutch colonial government (ca. 1860s- 1940s).<sup>1</sup> It also discusses the spread of Christianity, the development of the education, the economy and the technology in the post-colonial era (ca. 1950s -1990s). More specifically, it discusses the impact of the social transformations on the practise of *adat* (customary law) and the performance of the ceremonial music and dance, *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor* with special reference to the last two decades or so.

In the 1860s the RMG started converting the people. In the 1870s, the RMG and the Dutch colonial government worked hand in hand to introduce the people to their Western-style educational system as well as to their technological and communicative devices, transportation systems, and administrative practices; and in so doing they also introduced Western music and musical instruments. Together with the German missionaries, the Toba Batak people established the H.K.B.P., (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*—Batak Protestant Christian Church) in 1930. In the 1940s, members of the H.K.B.P disintegrated, which resulted in the formation of plural ethnic churches. From about 1950 there were large migrations of the people to the cities. At about the same time a huge Toba Batak community established itself in Medan. In the 1990s many Toba Batak reside in other big cities in Indonesia, including Jakarta and Bandung.

In this article I will argue that the development of Christianity as well as education among the people demanded that educated Christian Toba Batak continually reinterpret *adat*, including the use and performance of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. While the essence of *adat* always remains the same, the meaning and the practice of *adat* have always depended on the context of its usage. Contemporary times are no exception.

To begin the discussion, I shall briefly describe the ceremonial music and dance, the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble and the *tor-tor*, followed by the description of *adat*. I shall also discuss the result of contact between the Toba Batak people, German missionaries, and Dutch Government officials. Before writing the conclusion, I shall discuss the Toba Batak urban drift to East Sumatra (Medan) and the meaning of *adat* for contemporary Toba Batak people.

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<sup>1</sup> This article draws on research undertaken at Monash University, Melbourne. It was written while the author was Visiting Lecture in the School of Music – Conservatorium at Monash, July–October 2001. The author would like to thank Professor Margaret Kartomi and Dr. Kay Dreyfus of the School of Music–Conservatorium for their critical readings of this article.

### *Gondang Sabangunan and Tor-tor*

The *gondang sabangunan* is an ensemble that consists of a set of *taganing* (a five tuned drums: the *tingting*, the *paidua ni tingting*, the *painonga*, the *paidua odap*, and the *odap-odap* [single-headed drums]), two bass drums, a *gordang* (single-headed drum) and an *odap* (double-headed-drum), a set of four gongs, the *oloan*, the *ihutan*, the *panggora* and the *doal* (suspended gongs), a *sarune* (double-reed aerophone) and a *hesek* (a percussive metal or an empty beer bottle and a spoon).

The *gondang sabangunan* was, and still is, an integral part of the *adat*. The performance of this musical ensemble was central to Toba Batak religious and cultural practices. The music accompanied the worship of the gods and ancestral spirits at life cycle ceremonies, calendrical rice-growing events, and harvest celebrations as well as healing ceremonies, all of which are referred to collectively in this study as '*adat* feasts'. The music not only functioned to accompany the ceremonial dance but most importantly to serve as a communicative medium in order to strengthen relationships between individuals, groups of people, the gods (e.g. Mula Jadi Na Bolon, Batara Guru, Soripada, Mangala Bulan, Saniang Naga Laut, Boraspati ni Tano) and the ancestral spirits (*sahala ni ompu sijolo-jolo tubu*).

Like the *gondang sabangunan*, the *tor-tor* is a ritual language-like means of communication to venerate the gods and to honor the wife-giving party at a feast. Naturally, the *gondang sabangunan* and the *tor-tor* must be performed simultaneously; a *gondang* performance without *tor-tor* is regarded incomplete, and inconsistent with the rules that governed the performance of the *gondang sabangunan*. Indeed, for centuries the people practiced the *gondang* and the *tor-tor* as part of their religious observances, applying specific social and religious rules known as *adat ni gondang* (rules for performing *gondang* and *tor-tor*). These rules guided the ceremonial participants, who comprised ensemble players (*pargonsi*), ceremonial dancers (*panortor*), and ceremonial hosts (*hasuhuton* or *suhut*).

### *Adat*

Until about three decades or so after the publication of Vergouwen's book *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of North Sumatra* (1933), little attention had been given by scholars to *adat*. From the late 1950s *adat* began to attract scholars' attention in books, articles, and monographs as well as formal seminars.<sup>2</sup> Some introduced *adat* as a topic for seminars in church.<sup>3</sup> Today, *adat* remains a social issue that attracts discussions by many local and foreign scholars, *adat* practitioners, and ministers. Often these discussions in local newspapers and magazines become polemical.<sup>4</sup> Yet, *adat* remains an elusive concept.

Scholars from different disciplines have proposed various definitions of *adat*. Each of the definitions given below includes reference to different details, yet all of them indicate that the concept of *adat* includes the implementation of the pre-Christian Toba Batak belief system. Tampubolon, an expert on *adat* practices, maintains that *adat* is a religious norm and law that looks after the relationship between the gods and human beings as well as between the ancestors and their descendants. *Adat* cannot be changed; it must be obeyed (Tampubolon 1964: cited in Schreiner 1994: 115). The theologian, Pedersen, asserts that *adat* is a system established by the ancestors for their protection against each other as well as for preserving the equilibrium of the supernatural powers around them. The aim of practicing *adat* is to avoid disaster, restore harmony, maintain fertility, and ensure the welfare of villages and towns and their inhabitants. To disobey *adat* is believed to result in infertility, disease, disaster, and crop failure (Pedersen 1970: 36). The anthropologist, Bruner, observes that *adat* not only includes marriage law, inheritance, and property but also the procedures of life crisis ceremonies. It determines the mutual rights and obligations between the living and the deceased (Bruner 1959: 55). Sianipar, a Toba Batak priest, says that *adat* directs people's attitudes and actions in human relationships

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Tobing's *The Structure of the Toba Batak Belief in the High God* (1956), Bruner's 'The Toba Batak Village' (1959), Tampubolon's *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* (1964), Siahaan's *Sejarah Kebudayaan Batak* (1964) and Schreiner's *Adat dan Injil* (1994).

<sup>3</sup> For example, 'Seminar Adat di HKBP' occurred in 1968, 1976 and 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Polemical articles that discuss the practice of contemporary *adat* can be found, for example, in the magazine entitled *Bonapasogit* (Oct. 1989, No.2; April 1990, No. 8; May 1990, No. 9; June 1990, No. 10; July 1990, No. 11; July 1993, No. 39; September 1994, No. 53; January 1995, No. 57), published monthly by the Toba Batak community in Jakarta.

based upon values rooted in ancestral tradition (Sianipar 1973: 28–29). Schreiner, a German theologian, argues that *adat* is a traditional social law—‘suprapartes’—sanctioned by the ancestor who in the tribal religion determined the destiny of the community (Schreiner 1972: 285 quoted in Okazaki 1994: 53). Aritonang, another Toba Batak priest, states that *adat* is not only a social norm but also a reality that enfolds all dimensions of a community’s life, including people’s bodies and spiritual *lives* in the present and the future, the relationship between human beings and the creator, and each person’s ego and surroundings.

The most useful definition of *adat* is that it is a continually changing system of social, ethical and religious principles and practices that govern the social and religious life of a community. Thus, *adat* includes civil laws, social ethics, markers of stylistic identity and lifestyle, and norms of religious and ritual performance practice (see also Schreiner 1994: 217). Legally, it controls people’s uses and occupation of unused lands, management of their farms and irrigation systems, the system of inheritance, and the tradition of marriage (Bruner 1959: 55; Situmorang 1993: 42–45). In terms of social ethics, it directs people as regards proper behaviour towards their kinfolk and their environment. It also includes the kinship system. As a marker of stylistic identity in the arts and lifestyle, it governs ritual, music, dance and lifestyles, e.g. as practised at weddings, pre-funeral ceremonies and exhumation of bones ceremonies. Among its specific requirements is the rule that people perform the *gondang* and the *tor-tor* at their ceremonial feasts according to specific rules and that they pay respect to the *gondang* musicians and indigenous religious leaders. *Adat* maintains relationships between living human beings, the ancestral spirits and other gods; and it guides ritual communications between them. Rituals and religious ceremonies formalized these relationships when the *tor-tor* is performed, accompanied by the *gondang sabangunan*. *Adat* is realised in the indigenous religion, which Christian missionaries and Christianized Toba Batak refer to as *hasipelebeguan* (paganism). One Christian Toba Batak, Sianipar, is of the view that *adat* and paganism are inseparable aspects of the same phenomenon, based on the ancient religion (Sianipar 1973: 28–29).

When *adat* is practised at celebrations, it is called *ulaon adat* or *pesta adat* (*adat* feasts). However, the term ‘*adat* feast’ should not be confused with *adat* laws that control everyday social life. *Adat* feasts are formal, distinctive social events governed by traditional laws. Exclusive, highly organized and structured, they are part of social life, but they do not happen every day. *Adat* feasts have specific functions, such as to celebrate a wedding day, to welcome a newborn baby, to celebrate a funeral, to start erecting a new village or house, to celebrate moving into a new house, to celebrate a rice-growing season, to celebrate a harvest, or simply to worship ancestral spirits, gods, and other supernatural powers. Unlike in routine daily life, participants at feasts communicate or interact with each other through formal *adat* speeches, exchange ceremonial gifts such as the traditional shawl (*ulos*) and consume consecrated meals and drink (*sipanganon namarhadohoan*) to the accompaniment of the *gondang* and the *tor-tor*. At *adat* feasts, participants also communicate with supernatural powers by uttering ritual prayers (*tonggo-tonggo*) and presenting offerings of foods, slaughtered livestock and incense. *Gondang* and *tor-tor* also serve as a medium of communication.

*Adat* feasts are divided into two categories: *horja* and *pesta bius*. In general, a *horja* is a ceremonial feast performed at the clan (*marga*) level. The central purpose of the *horja* is the strengthening of social relationships and the worship of ancestral spirits.<sup>5</sup> At a *horja*, participants consists of the male descendants of a clan (*dongan sabutuha*) as well as those who ‘give’ their daughters or sisters in marriage (*hula-hula*) and those who ‘receive’ wives in marriage (*boru*). In Toba Batak language the relationship between these three parties is known as the *dalihan na tolu* (three hearth stones). In the *pesta bius*, on the other hand, the role of the three parties (*dalihan na tolu*) is ignored. The people usually refer to the *pesta bius* as a communal sacrificial ceremony (*mamele* or *pamelean*) in which the participants worship the gods. A *pesta bius* is organized by an indigenous religious council (*parbaringin*) and led by the *pande bolon*, the leader of the *parbaringin*.<sup>6</sup> A *pesta bius* is attended by members of several different villages, the federation of which is known in Toba Batak as *bius*.<sup>7</sup> At a *pesta bius*, various communal religious ceremonies

<sup>5</sup> Situmorang (1993: 114) further observes that the *horja* was usually led by clan elders, sometimes including the *datu bolon*, a professional medicine-man who is qualified in magic practices as well as in spirit-invocation.

<sup>6</sup> References to the *parbaringin* organization can be found in Vergouwen (1964: 71-79) and Situmorang (1993b: 73-80, 110-119, 169-174).

<sup>7</sup> References to the term *bius* as a territory and as a communal sacrificial ceremony can be found in Vergouwen (1964: 88-91); Castles (1972); Sangti (1977: 15); Sherman (1990: 80-90) and Situmorang (1993b: 56-80);

such as *mangase taon* (an annual sacrificial ceremony celebrating the year of rice-growing season) and *mamele sombaon* (a ceremony invoking ancestral spirits that are believed to become gods) are performed. At present the Toba Batak people still perform *horja* but no longer practise *pesta bius*. This is despite the fact that many remain devoted to the pre-Christian *adat* and belief system. But *horja* and *pesta bius*, despite the differences between them, are actually outcomes of the same system. Both are referred to in this article as *adat* feasts.

During the time of the German missionaries, who apparently had little understanding of *adat*, the Protestant church portrayed the *adat* as a divisible system. Its proselytizing strategy was to divide *adat* into three categories: (i) the anti-Christian, (ii) the neutral and (iii) the pro-Christian (see Schreiner 1994: 5, 52–60; Aritonang 1988: 439). The missionaries prohibited *adat* practices that they had classified as anti-Christian and allowed those that were classified as neutral or pro-Christian. As Schreiner reported, this categorization was intended to assist the process of the Christianization of *adat*, which began in the 1870s. In the process the missionaries devised sets of church laws that regulated the practices of *adat* among their converts as well as those who still rejected Christianity. In the 1920s the church suspended that process, after which it supervised the congregation’s practice of *adat* by excluding all aspects that were not anti-Christian (Schreiner 1994: 60).

By the 1940s, after 80 years of contact, the missionaries had gradually changed their perception of *adat*. Although they still made judgments of *adat* practices on the basis of the three categories, they began to allow people to perform some *adat* practices which had formerly been prohibited. Although the missionaries left the Batak Lands in the mid-1940s, the church ministers were still influenced by the way the missionaries had perceived *adat*. Thus, the three categories, i.e. the pro-Christian, the anti-Christian, and the neutral, are clearly distinguished in the 1952, 1968 and 1987 Orders of Discipline prepared by Toba Batak ministers.

It is necessary now to discuss why the people practised *adat* before they embraced Christianity. Originally, people’s individual social *lives* were pervaded with religious meaning, directed by religious motives, and surrounded by supernatural concepts about the gods (Pedersen 1970: 23). Traditionally, the people believed that these supernatural powers had passed *adat* on to them and could bestow blessings on them (see Figure 1. The cycle of *adat* practice.) The three foremost blessings were *hasangapon* (community respect, authority and prestige), *hagabeon* (having many children), and *hamoraon* (prosperity). To obtain blessings one had to maintain a good relationship with the gods, the ancestral spirits and relatives in one’s wife-giver group (*hulahula*). Thus to attract blessings and avoid *adat* sanctions were the main purposes of practising *adat* (see Tobing 1956: 132–133).

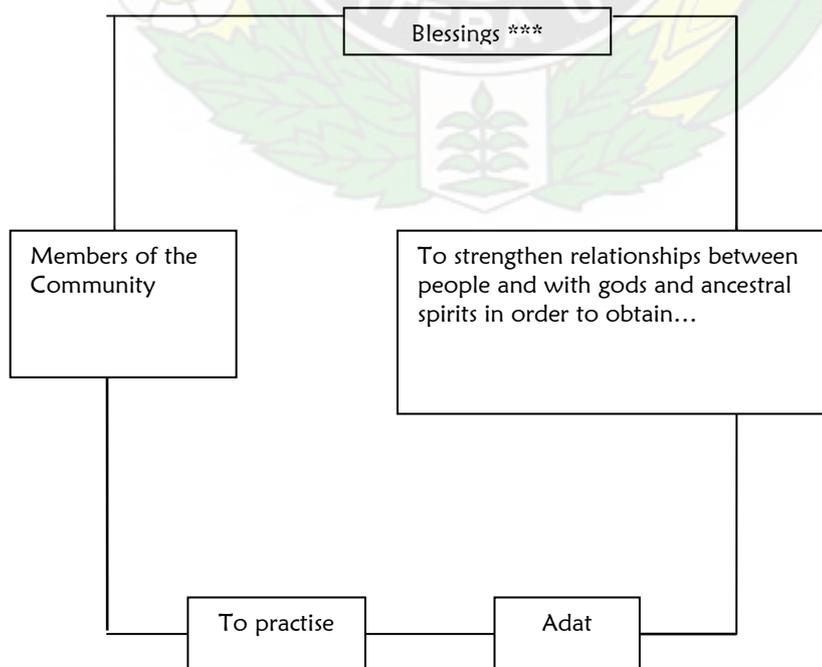


Figure 1. Cycle of *adat* practice (\*\*\* blessings include the ability to have children, prosperity community respect)

As Pedersen has asserted, *adat* was practised to restore harmony in relationships, avert disaster, preserve health, and affirm the prosperity of a group or village. Catastrophe, disease, infertility, and crop failure were associated with the violation of *adat*. Such violations could expose an individual and his/her whole community to unknown perils (Pedersen 1970: 36; Schreiner 1994: 28–29).

### Contact with Christianity and the Dutch Colonists

The German Christian missionaries and Dutch administration left a deep imprint on Toba Batak culture; indeed they were the primary agents of social change. They introduced the people to a new religion and culture, including a new educational and legal system, commercial goods, life style, music and instruments as well as a system of administration. Christianization and colonization simultaneously contributed to the major cultural transformation of Toba Batak society between ca.1860s and the present time.

There had been several earlier attempts to Christianize the Batak people. The VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) actually established a Christian congregation in Padang as early as 1679, but there was no evangelization among the local people. In the early 1820s Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles authorized Richard Burton, Nathaniel Ward and Evans of the Baptist Mission Society of England to evangelize the people of Sumatra. Prior to the mission, Burton worked in the Batak-Malay town of Sibolga where he concentrated on translating part of the Old Testament. Ward resided in Silindung south of Lake Toba while investigating the widespread outbreak of cholera in the region. Evans established a Christian school in Tapian na Uli (Pedersen 1970: 48-49). In 1824, the three missionaries gathered in Tapian na Uli. When they were about to start evangelizing, the Dutch colonial government forced them to leave the town (*ibid.*: 208; 49).

After these first three missionaries had returned to Holland, the Nederlands Mission Society (NZG) sent Karl August Gutzlaff to proselytize in Sumatra. Due to the Padri war he could not proceed inland so he concentrated instead on proselytizing the Chinese community in Jakarta (*ibid.*: 208; 49). The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCMF) of Boston, U.S.A. sent Samuel Munson and Henry Lyman to Sibolga to proselytize among the Batak people in 1834. Like previous missions, it also failed. Worse than that, when they reached Lobu Pining (a village near Silindung) on 28 June 1834, the local chieftain, Raja Pangalamei and his followers allegedly killed and ate them (Van Hasselt 1935: 8; Lumbantobing 1992: 66). Gould, however, denies that this happened, saying that it cannot be proven as there were no eyewitnesses (Gould 1961: 113). The Dutch Bible Study Group of Holland sent Neubronner van der Tuuk to Sibolga to learn the Batak language and dialects in 1849. Tuuk translated the Old Testament into Toba Batak, wrote some books on Toba Batak grammar and compiled a Toba Batak-Dutch dictionary. Despite all these attempts, early nineteenth century Christian missionaries were unable to achieve their goal to convert large numbers of people. Four missionaries--Klammer, Betz, Van Asselt and Heine<sup>8</sup>--who worked for the RMG began to proselytise the Batak people of Sipirok, the small town located in South Tapanuli, whose inhabitants had formerly been converted to Islam (Kraemer 1958: 46-47; cf. Rodgers 1981: 2-3). Their effort, however, resulted in converting only two people to Christianity (Kruger 1966: 211; cf. Lumbantobing 1992: 69).

In 1864 another RMG representative, Dr. I.L. Nommensen, took over the leadership of the mission and moved its headquarters from Sipirok to the Silindung area where the people had not been touched by Islam. During the first year of his work, Nommensen struggled not only to proselytize among the local people but also to find a place to stay. Despite this situation, he converted four men, four women and five children in 1865 (Pedersen 1970: 61). Johannsen was another German RMG missionary who came to the Silindung valley in 1866 to help Nommensen (*ibid.*: 61). Within two years after the first people were converted, Nommensen and Johannsen converted less than a hundred Toba Batak spirit believers in the Silindung valley. Two years later, Nommensen's colleagues, Pilgram and Kessel, moved to the mission at Balige and Muara, two villages on the southern shore of Lake Toba (Pedersen 1970: 67). In the next four decades the

<sup>8</sup> Before coming to the Batak Lands, the German RMG missionaries, Klammer and Belz, worked in Kalimantan. The others, Van Asselt and Heine were Dutch missionaries from Ermelo, a small town in Holland (Kruger 1966: 210; cf. Aritonang 1988: 147).

RMG reached areas further east, i.e., Kabupaten Simalungun. When Nommensen died on 23 May 1918, the German RMG missionaries had proselytized as far as Kabupaten Dairi among the Pakpak Batak. Under the leadership of Nommensen, then, the Christian missionaries successfully achieved the goal of their mission. From the end of the nineteenth century, a motto spread which read: 'to be Toba Batak means to be Christian', i.e., their identity included being Christian (Pedersen 1970: 69; Sianipar 1973: 8; Lumbantobing 1992: 79; Schreiner 1994: 11).

In 1992, a former leader of the G.K.P.I., Andar Lumbantobing traced the growth of the church between 1861 to 1954 according to the statistics provided in the *Jahresbericht der Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*<sup>9</sup> (1861- 1954), as follows:

**Table 1.**  
**The Growth of Christian Converts in the Toba Batak Protestant Church in the Period between 1861-1954**  
(Source: Lumbantobing 1992: 74)

Year	Christian Converts
1861	2
1867	115
1870	849
1871	1,250
1877	2,173
1881	5,988
1892	21,779
1898	40,723
1911	103,538
1923	210,416
1940	429,531
1954	601,156

According to Cunningham and Schreiner, who studied the growth of converts after 1954, by 1957 the total number of Christian converts had increased to 700,000 members and by 1960, to 900,000 (Cunningham 1958: 178; Schreiner 1994: 9). Excluding people who belong to other Christian denominations such as Catholics, Methodists, and Pentecostals, almost two million Toba Batak people are registered today as members of the two biggest Protestant church institutions: H.K.B.P and G.K.P.I. In tune with the growth of converts, many churches were built throughout the region. Since Independent, a church has always been able to be found within every Toba Batak community, associated with vibrant community activity. At every Sunday services all congregations perform Western church music, including organ music, German hymns, brass band music, choir music for three or four voices. Western music has become the primary musical accompaniment for the liturgy employed by each denomination. The H.K.B.P and G.K.P.I use European hymns, especially German hymns, the texts of which are translated into Toba Batak. As far as the present church music is concerned, there are churches, except Catholic ones that have asked composers to write new church hymns based on original Toba Batak music and texts.

The above table shows that after a small growth in the 1860s there was a dramatic increase from the 1870s onwards. Why and how did such a huge number of people convert within such a short period of time? Perhaps it was as Kraemer maintains:

That which is feared or worshipped is placed beyond any moral criterion. That which gives superiority, power, advantage or prestige to somebody or something, be it human being, an animal or an object, that is to be feared, worshipped or desired... The frequently used word *hasangapon*, i.e., highness, prestige, is probably the best word to reveal the mysteries of the [Toba] Batak soul. It is *hasangapon* which moves his soul most deeply and to which he is most attracted (Kraemer 1958: 53).

<sup>9</sup> Aritonang's *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak* (1988) employs the same source for the statistics of the growth of Christian converts and schools in the Batak Lands.

The Toba Batak theologian, Aritonang, provided an even clearer perspective in his work of 1988. As he asserted, when the German missionaries arrived in 1864, the people were in a state of social disintegration. Three decades before they arrived, the Batak of South Tapanuli had been defeated by the Padri armies. In the 1860s, the Padri armies were about to reattack as the missionaries were about to start their proselytizing in Silindung Valley (Pedersen 1970: 46; Aritonang 1988: 153). This reminded the people of the suffering of their relatives in the southern part of their territory, who had been forced by the Padri armies to embrace Islam. While their communities were disintegrating as a result of continual fratricidal war among the clans, their confidence in the ability of customary law to solve these problems reached a new low. Under these critical conditions they were prone to accept the Christian missionaries as a way of solving their social problems (Aritonang 1988: 152-153).

The approach which Nommensen and Johannsen employed in proselytising the people of Silindung valley in the early stage of Christianisation merits a mention. When they started planting the seeds of Christianity among the people, they offered them considerable help in solving their social problems. They assisted in terminating tensions among clans or village chieftains, helping to cure sick people especially children, establishing public medical centers, helping the insolvent to pay back their loans, releasing slaves, and providing education and other facilities, all of which encouraged the people to embrace Christianity (*Ibid*:153-154; Pedersen 1970: 61-63). Using such an approach Nommensen and Johannsen established the first Christian community in North Sumatra, which was indeed the embryo of the Christian movement among the Toba Batak as well as the pioneers of the Batak Christian congregation, presently known as *Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* (H.K.B.P.).

The establishment of the Christian community in Silindung valley, however, led the people into social conflict. Those who converted were abandoned from their villages and communal sacrificial ceremonies. Converts also lost their rights to own houses and rice field in their villages. Despite this, Nommensen looked after those who were abandoned from their villages and *lived* together in Huta Dame ('Peace Village'), a small village in Silindung valley that had become Nommensen's headquarters, which contained a small church, a school building and several houses. Nommensen not only did provided them shelter but also separated them from their relatives who rejected Christianity.

In preventing the converts from turning back to spirit belief, Nommensen and Johannsen established various social regulations concerning *adat* practices which the new community were not allowed to practise according to Christian precepts. Thus, they prohibited the people from retaining the sacrificial community (*bius*), and from performing ancestral worship, *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. Church, school, congregational Sunday services, Bible study and Western music such as brass bands and German hymns were substituted for them. Nevertheless, they allowed the people to practice traditional marriage, to maintain kinship systems and housing-systems, to use their language and written scripts (Pedersen 1970: 63; Aritonang 1988: 405, 439). Thus the converts did not lose their Toba Batak identity. Nommensen and Johannsen introduced the prohibitions in the form of the Order of Discipline of the church in 1866 (Schreiner 1994: 63-64). After revising it in 1867, it became a civil law for Christians, including regulations on marriage and inheritance and punishments for gamblers and thieves (*Ibid*: 63-64). Revision of the civil law occurred again in 1879 and 1892. In 1913 a Dutch lawyer, J.C. Kielstra, listed the laws in the book entitled *Beschrijving van het bijzondere Adatrecht van de inheemsche Christenen in het Batakland* ('Registration of Adat-law among Christianised Toba Batak in the Batak Lands') (*ibid*: 71).

In 1868 Nommensen and Johannsen, whose *lives* were endangered by those who rejected Christianity in the Silindung valley, requested protection in 1868 from the Dutch colonial government in the South Tapanuli region. War between the colonial government and the followers of the Sisingamangaraja occurred in 1878, 1883 and 1889 (Situmorang 1993b: 20-21), but victory was never on the people's side. The colonial retained administration of the Silindung valley from 1879 (Schreiner 1994: 70).

In the 1870s the Toba Batak people who strongly opposed the missionaries and the colonial government had formed a traditional religion-political organization called Parmalim; it was led by Guru Somalaing Pardede, a Toba Batak from Balige (Situmorang 1993a: 63, 85). In the early 1890s this religion-political organization divided into different sects, i.e. Parmalim, Parsitengka, Nasiakbagi, Sisingamangaraja, and Parhudamdandam. These organizations aimed not only to worship the Toba Batak prophet Sisingamangaraja and to expel the 'white-men' (the

missionaries and the colonists) from the Batak Lands (see Situmorang 1993a: 81, 85; Iletto 1992: 227; Castles 1972: 76–79) but also to maintain the ancestral *adat* as well as the performance of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. Some sects syncretically absorbed Christian identities such as Jehovah, Jesus, and Virgin Mary into their religious vocabulary. Similarly, others, especially the Parhudamdandam, absorbed some Islamic influences. Their religious practices included often going into trance while reciting Arabic phrases; and in everyday life they avoided eating pork<sup>10</sup> (Castles 1972: 83–84).

Between 1890 and 1897 these religion-political organization executed such traditional sacrificial ceremonies as *pesta bius* to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan*, organized by the collaboration of the members of a *parbaringin* and a *bius*. Through such an activity, these organizations attempted to gain the support of the local people and to attract new Christian converts to return to their ancestral tradition. This effort was not successful, however, resulted in social conflict between the people. Nommensen perceived the organizations of religious leaders, *pesta bius* and *gondang-tor-tor* performances not only as the seed of social conflict but also as an interference to the Christianization and persuaded the colonial government to ban them by law. In 1879 the colonial government enforced a civil law banning these traditional practices (see Situmorang 1993a: 45, 65). To the missionaries such a prohibition meant the destruction of the traditional belief system and its practice. To the colonial government it meant the destruction of traditional political organizations (*bius* and *parbaringin*) (Situmorang 1993a: 45) while to the people it meant a death sentence to their religion (Tobing 1956: 27).

Despite these religion-political organizations, the policies of Christianization and colonization remained in force. In the 1870s the missionaries used schools as media for proselytizing of Christianity. Whenever they established a church, they worked hand in hand with the colonial government to build a school as part of that church (Aritonang 1988: 27, 154).<sup>11</sup> Establishing school and church became the two equally important targets of the Mission's development plan, based on the belief that social services, especially education, should accompany the spreading of the Gospel (*ibid*: 27). By 1870 the RMG had established ten public primary schools that accommodated about 200 students. At the same time the Dutch colonial government build fourteen schools which were attended by 634 students. By 1936, the RMG controlled 585 schools with 43,184 students and the Dutch colonists 159 schools with 13, 635 students. Prior to the second World War, the missionaries managed 646 primary schools and five technology training colleges which spread in many villages in the Batak Lands (*ibid*: 30).

To the people of Silindung, for example, education was possibly the most attractive inducement to embraced Christianity; they believed that education would lead them to progress (*hamajuon*), esteem and prestige (*sahala hasangapon*), or what Kraemer refers to as 'power' (Hutauruk 1993: 27; Castles 1972: 70). In other words, the earliest Christian generation was motivated primarily by their desire to elevate themselves out of poverty (Sinaga 1981: 30; Lumbantobing 1992:73). Following the report of Burton and Ward on their journey into the Batak Land, Kraemer wrote:

The only things which interested them in their first contact with the Gospel were increased wealth, prestige, and power. If the Gospel could bring them these things, they were ready to listen, if not they were not (Kraemer 1958: 44).

Thus, when literate Batak people secured jobs in the Dutch government administration or the plantations which the Dutch had established in the 1870s in the Deli area, white collar positions and education became increasingly highly regarded (Bruner 1961: 511). To the converts, becoming Christian meant obtaining education and social status. Thus when the missionaries offered schools to the people, mass conversion occurred. An increase in Christian converts naturally meant a decrease in traditional religious practices.

Between the early 1910s and 1940s the needs for jobs, a better education and economy and social status were in high demand. Kraemer was correct: the first and foremost people sought

<sup>10</sup> Christian and Islamic influences were probably exerted on the sects because Guru Somalaing, the founder of Parmalim and from which the other sects developed, always communicated with the Christian missionaries. In 1890 an Italian botanist, Elio Modigliani, made a trip to Batak Lands. During his journey into the area, he was accompanied by Guru Somalaing, a *datu* who resisted both Christianity and the influences of the colonists. Modigliani, who was a Catholic, introduced Guru Somalaing not only to Catholicism but also to Muslim leaders of the people living on the Asahan river (Castles 1972: 74: see also Situmorang 1993a: 3–24).

<sup>11</sup> In 1893 the Dutch colonists started to subsidise schools that were managed by the Batak Mission (Aritonang 1988: 209-212).

an improved economic, educational, and material existence as well as social status and only secondarily the Christian faith. Such expectations developed as the people observed the educational and social improvements enjoyed by the Mandailing Batak who, during the period between the late 1800s and early 1900s, attended Dutch government schools. Indeed, in the early 1900s many educated Mandailing Batak people of South Tapanuli moved to Medan where they obtained work in government plantations and administrative offices (Pelly 1994: 64-65).

The RMG schools differed in some respects from government schools. The missionaries offered the people education, but it was basically designed to improve their intellectual skills, and most importantly, to strengthen their Christian faith. Such education, in the early 1910s, became less attractive to the people than that of the government, which aimed to develop skills that it needed to run government plantations or administrative offices (Kraemer 1958:67). Accordingly, some students joined the secular schools provided by the colonial government. Thus the Toba Batak joined the Mandailing Batak to obtain a Dutch school education which enabled them to obtain administrative work in the cities (ibid. 67; see also Aritonang 1988: 352-354). Others moved to Medan, Jakarta, and Singapore to look for work (see Castles 1972: 72-73; Aritonang 1988: 290, 295, 349). On becoming established in the cities, they invited their families to *live* there for better work and education opportunity (Bruner 1961: 515). This process finally led to a major urban drift by the Toba Batak in the early 1950s.

The schools, however, served not only as a medium through which Christianity and scientific knowledge could reach the people, but also as a channel through which Western music culture could be diffused throughout the Silindung valley and its vicinity. The RMG schools offered a four-year elementary school curriculum which included not only Bible Studies, History, Geography, and Mathematics, but also lessons in singing (eg., church hymns and choral music) and playing the violin (see Aritonang 1988: 251, 259-260, 247-254). However, students did not learn to play the *gondang* because the missionaries thought of the *gondang* tradition as heathen music (ibid. 251, 259-260). Students were required to carry some extra curricular activities such as gardening, rearing, handy-working, choral singing, and brass band playing (ibid. 249). Some early musicians and song writers of Toba Batak popular music<sup>12</sup> (e.g., Nahum Situmorang, Sidik Sitompul, and Liberty Manik who were well-known between the 1940s and 1970s) graduated from one of the two school institutions: the RMG school or the Dutch colonial government school. Thus, Western music lessons not only accustomed Toba Batak students to church hymns, choir, music theory and Western musical instruments, but also produced Toba Batak musicians of popular music.

Churches served not only as centers of Christian practices but also a place for Western musical practices. In every Sunday service congregations sang German hymns, some with the accompaniment of a reed organ (*poti marende*) (lit., 'singing box'), others with a brass band. In addition, article X, no. 6 of the 1907 Order of Discipline of the church instituted by the RMG, required that every *guru huria* ('Leader of a Congregation') should be a person that could play a *poti marende* (singing box). At the present time, some Protestant churches still use reed organs, while others use electric keyboard and/or a brass band. German hymns which were compiled into the book called *Buku Ende* ('Song Book') and translated into different Batak dialects have been the main constituents of the liturgy since the late 1870s. In the last four decades, female and/or male choir associations have also multiplied as part of congregations. Like the hymns, choir singing in Sunday service became part of the liturgy since the early 1900s (see Hutauruk 1993: 84). Some choirs performed works of local composers, other performed works of Western composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, Hayden, and Bach.

From 1864 to 1940, the Protestant Toba Batak church--formerly called *Huria na ditongatongan ni Halak Batak* ('Church of Batak')<sup>13</sup> operated under the leadership of German missionaries, who managed matters associated with finance, school, and church, including the Order of Discipline, music and the liturgy and the synod and its meetings. However, the German missionaries could not stop the rise of the *hamajuon* ('progress') movement in 1917 led by a choir association known as *Zangvereeniging hadomuan* ('Hadomuan Choir') from Balige, the members of which were mostly teachers and workers at government institutions (see Hutauruk 1993: 84).

<sup>12</sup> By 'Toba Batak popular music' I mean secular harmonized songs with Toba Batak lyrics performed to the accompaniment of guitars in a synthesis of Toba Batak and European styles.

<sup>13</sup> This name is written in the title of the 1907 and 1924 Orders of Discipline of the church, which were constituted by the Batak Mission.

These people demanded that an independent Toba Batak church institution be established (Hutauruk 1993: 73-87; cf. Aritonang 1988: 294 ff.). This movement took about thirteen years to reach its goal: leadership was transferred from the German RMG missionaries to the Toba Batak ministers in 1930. From this time on, the H.K.B.P--its new name which was approved at the 1929 Synod meeting--was supposed to become an independent church, i.e, no longer under the direction of the R.M.G. However, this did not occur. The Toba Batak ministers still controlled the structure of the church council; they even took over the financial administration of the institution and were responsible for the welfare of the congregation. Despite this, German missionaries still held positions of authority in the church council (Keuning 1958: 15; see also Pedersen 1970: 81; Aritonang 1988: 301; Schreiner 1994: 14). True independent was only reached in 1940 after the *Pendeta* ('priest') K. Sirait was elected to be the first Toba Batak Ephorus (Pedersen 1970: 96). He, together with other Toba Batak ministers, was then responsible for all matters associated with the church and its congregations. In 1942 *Pendeta* K. Sirait was replaced by J. Sihombing (1942-1962), under whose leadership the H.K.B.P (in 1952) was accepted as a member of the Lutheran World Federation (Cunningham 1958: 178; Pedersen 1970: 186).

The transformation of leadership brought a new era to the H.K.B.P congregations. Within ten years the newly elected church council had introduced the new Order of Discipline of the church which accommodated *adat* practices (cf. Pedersen 1970:96-100). The church allowed the Protestants to perform *adat* ceremonies to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. Thus, the establishment of the 1952 Order of Discipline, whose articles were in tune with the present Order of Discipline of the H.K.B.P and G.K.P.I, marked the reconciliation of the Protestant church and the traditional *adat*.

### Toba Batak Urban Drift to East Sumatra (Medan)

This section discusses the establishment of the Toba Batak community in Medan (ca. 1900s - 1990s) and then moves on to discuss the emergence of *gondang sabangunan* associations in the Toba Batak society (ca.1960s -1990s). The Toba Batak urban migration started around the 1900s and accelerated in the 1920s. A period of huge urban migration occurred in the 1950s. Between the 1960s and 1970s the Batak people acquired ownership of most of land in Medan. In 1980s, the Toba Batak people held most of the jobs in schools as well as governments administrative offices. In the 1990s many Toba Batak still held leading roles in government offices, managed many private commercial enterprises, and worked in various professions. Thus, the Toba Batak people experienced radical social change.

In the early 1900s Medan was under the authority of the *Kesultanan Melayu Deli* ('Deli-Malay Sultanate'). Between the establishment of the rubber plantations in Deli in 1863 and the coming of the Japanese in 1942, Medan also became the center for the Dutch administrative offices and commercial activities in North Sumatra. Thus, job opportunities were more plentiful in Medan than in the villages. Such promising opportunities attracted the Toba Batak who had obtained an education from the RMG and the Dutch schools.

By the late 1910s a substantial number of educated Christian Toba Batak were living in Medan but they had to *live* in the outskirts of the city because of objections by the Kesultanan (Bruner 1961: 511). The Malays discriminated against them socially and by religion.<sup>14</sup> As a result of such discrimination, the Toba Batak had a hard time finding jobs as well as places of residence. Worse, although they could practice their religion secretly, they had to return to their homelands to take part in *adat* ceremonies (*ibid*: 511).<sup>15</sup>

A road connecting Medan and such towns and villages as Pematang Siantar, Parapat, Porsea, Balige, Laguboti, Sipoholon, Tarutung, and Sibolga (a town on the west coast of North Sumatra), was completed in 1915. The road facilitated the drift of the Toba Batak to the city of Medan. In the late 1920s the Toba Batak population in Medan had increased to more than a thousand people. By this time, they had their own church and recreational association; and they performed *adat* ceremonies (*ibid*: 511). We still do not know, however, whether the people in Medan performed *gondang* music in *adat* ceremonies in the 1920s.

<sup>14</sup> The Malay people in Medan regarded the Toba Batak as *kaffirs* ('unbelievers'), *najis* ('unclean people'), pork eaters and cannibals (Bruner 1961: 511; cf. Pelly 1994: 103).

<sup>15</sup> In order to be able to live in Medan they had to claim to be Malay or Muslim Batak, and in such a situation they had to speak Malay and abandoned membership of their *marga* (Bruner 1961: 511).

A huge number of Toba Batak people migrated to towns in East Sumatra in post-Independent Indonesia. By this time, there were more Toba Batak people who urbanized to the cities than those who stayed in the Batak Lands (Bruner 1972: 209). About 250,000 Toba Batak left their villages to join the “land-occupation movement” in East Sumatra in 1956 (Cunningham 1958: vii). Of that number a total of about 13,000 lived in Medan (*Ibid.*: vii). Such a huge number could reside in Medan because the religious and ethnic discrimination formerly enforced by the Kesultanan, had come to end during the social revolution (1942-1945), in which the Indonesian fought the Japanese for the Independent (cf. Bruner 1961: 512).<sup>16</sup> Some of these emigrants were students, teachers, traders, reporters, clerks, and farmers (cf. Castles 1972: 72). They resided in Kecamatan Labuhan, Kecamatan Medan Timur, Kecamatan Medan Denai, Kecamatan Sunggal, and Kecamatan Johor (Pelly 1994: 105), all of which are located on the outskirts of the city. Many bought unused lands from the local Malay people and converted them into ricefields (*Ibid.*:103).

As the people settled in the new places, they built church (*Ibid.*: 104-105) and formed “voluntary groupings” (Bruner 1972: 213), including *punguan marga* (‘clan associations’), *dongan sahuta* (‘neighbourhood units’), *punguan partangiangan* (‘church groups’). Such voluntary groupings provided the people with a means to perform *adat* as well as Christian practices. This suggests that urban life did not prevent the people from practising *adat*. As Bruner asserts, the *punguan marga*, which did not occur in the villages, was “the product of the city” (Bruner 1972: 208; Sihombing 1993: 22). At present, the *punguan marga* has become an integral part of urban Toba Batak social activity. Almost every clan in the city has its own *punguan marga*. Members of *punguan marga* are mostly middle-aged and married. Activities of the *punguan marga* centre on social services, e.g. helping members of the organization in different situations such as performing funerals, celebrating the birth of newborn babies, and wedding ceremonies. Some of them are performed to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*.

For political reasons, census conducted after 1930 did not mention issues associated with ethnicity (Pelly 1994: 79). As a result, a census conducted between the 1960s and the 1970s failed to show the total number of Toba Batak who migrated to Medan (*ibid.*: 79). In 1981 the total population of Medan was 1,294,132 of whom 14,11% (about 182,600) were Toba Batak (*Ibid.*: 81). Many Toba Batak secured jobs and thereby acquired increased social prestige. From 1960 to 1981 most of the school teachers in Medan were Toba Batak (Pelly 1994: 122). Toba Batak also dominated government administration offices, e.g. the Department of Treasury, the Department of Industry, the Department of Culture and Education, the Army and City Councils (*Ibid.*: 122). Similarly, in 1981 many Toba Batak practised as journalists, lawyers as well as medical doctors. In 1994, the total population of Medan was 1,876,100.<sup>17</sup> It is uncertain how many of this total are Toba Batak; but we do know that there were 653 Protestant churches and 33 Catholic churches, so the number must have been substantial..

When Toba Batak people move from their villages to urban areas, they always bring with them their *adat*, and perform ceremonies (see also Bruner 1961: 509). Pre-funeral and wedding ceremonies are the most common *adat* ceremonies that take place among the Toba Batak people in Medan. During my 1994 fieldwork in Medan, on almost every Friday and Saturday *adat* feasts--especially wedding ceremonies--were held in various public halls,<sup>18</sup> sometimes accompanied by *gondang sabangunan* music, and at other times by brass band and popular music.

As has been noted, the Toba Batak people have experienced major social change in the twentieth century. Many moved to Medan to *live*, bring up children, work, and to study. The difference between the lifestyles of those who reside in the city and those who remained in the villages today is quite extreme. While many urban Toba Batak *live* in big houses with electricity, running water, electricity, communication devices, and private cars, many rural people still struggle to work their rice fields for basic sustenance. This does not mean, however, that no changes that took place in the villages. The completion of the road mentioned above facilitated

<sup>16</sup> According to Bruner, during the social revolution (1942-1945) most members of the Kesultanan were killed, while those who survived lost their political power (Bruner 1961:511-512).

<sup>17</sup> This total is according to the data provided in the book, entitled *North Sumatra in Figure 1994*, published in 1995 by the Statistical Office of North Sumatra and the Regional Development Planning Board of North Sumatra Province.

<sup>18</sup> feasts took place in the following public halls: Sopo Godang H.K.B.P (Jalan Sudirman, Medan), ‘Wisma Umum’ (Jl. Bakti, Medan), Wisma Uli (Jalan Perjuangan, Medan), Balperum G.K.P.I (Jl. Sailendra, Medan), Wisma Taman Sari I, Wisma Taman Sari II (Jalan Setia Budi, Medan), and Wisma Agape (Jalan Pelita, Medan).

the flow of the villagers to the cities, thus changing the structure of the population in the villages. It also fostered the establishment of the economic activities between the people in the hinterland and urban people as well as the introduction of technology to the villagers. Interaction between the villagers and urban people, be it through economic transaction, family visit and tourism, also allowed the diffusion of urban cultures and commercial goods--e.g., clothing, cinema, popular music, gambling, intoxicating drinks, radio, telephone, newspaper, magazine, post-offices, car and public transport--to the villages (Aritonang 1988: 284-285). All of these are now familiar to the villagers. Thus, change not only occurred in the cities within urban people but also within the people who remained in the villages.

The question that now arises is: how did urban people establish *gondang* associations? As more Toba Batak people settled in Medan during the 1950s, more *adat* feasts were held among the people (see Pelly 1994: 104). However, according to an informant from Medan, Nainggolan, *adat* feasts that took place in Medan during the 1950s did not include the *gondang sabangunan*, because there was no *gondang* association. Most importantly, it was because the Protestant church did not allow its members to perform *gondang*. The urban Toba Batak used to perform *adat* feasts secretly in the villages rather than the cities if they wanted *gondang sabangunan* to be performed, because *gondang* musicians are always available there.<sup>19</sup>

Although no evidence has yet been found that *gondang* associations existed in Medan during the 1960s, we do have evidence that the *gondang sabangunan* was performed. According to Nainggolan, when urban people asked that the *gondang sabangunan* be performed at *adat* feasts, they usually hired *gondang* musicians from the villages. However, hiring musicians from the villages were not always effective as it was very costly to the hosts. Finding local musicians that could organized *gondang* music was, then, a good compromise to the problem.

In the 1970s, however, we do have evidence that two *gondang sabangunan* groups had been established in Medan: namely, the 'Gondang Batak Nauli,' led by a man named Sinurat, of Jalan Serdang in Medan and the 'Gondang Batak Satahi', led by another man named Sinurat of Jalan Garuda in Medan.<sup>20</sup> They performed at *adat* feasts and church functions and were usually paid for it.

The establishment of such *gondang* associations in Medan led to the commercialisation of *gondang* music. When the commercial recording studio, Studio Robinson was established in Medan around the 1970s, recording companies included *gondang* music on their cassettes, using cassette labels such as Mini and OK (see Yampolsky 1985: xi, 50). This in turn had the effect of accelerating the founding of more *gondang sabangunan* associations. Members of some *gondang* association recorded their music in the studio and were paid royalties. Among the groups that recorded *gondang* between the late 1970s and early 1980 were Gondang Sahata Saoloan, Gondang Nahornop, Gondang Saurdot, Gondang Parsaoran, Gondang Parsaoran Nauli and Gondang Horas.

Local producers distributed commercial *gondang* recordings not only to people in the city but also in the villages. Yet buyers' response to commercial recordings did not help the cassette distributors. The *gondang* music on the cassettes has never been played at *adat* feasts. According to the leader of a *gondang* association from Medan, J. Nainggolan, those who purchased commercial *gondang* recording cassettes usually used them for home entertainment, not for *adat* ceremonies. This is because the people preferred *live gondang* performance at *adat* feasts.<sup>21</sup> This attitude affected the growth of the *gondang* recording cassette industry. In fact, nowadays, cassettes containing *gondang* recordings are hardly found in cassette shops in Medan, it is as if they disappeared. During my 1992 field work in Medan, I only found one distributor 'Toko Riang', in Jalan Sutomo, Medan that sold *gondang* cassettes. According to Sembiring, a former operator of the Robinson studio in Medan, the *gondang* music cassettes sold in Toko Riang were reproductions of master recordings made in the period between the 1970s and early 1980s; it is probable that no new recording sessions were made after this period.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, more and more people in rural and urban areas were performing *adat* feasts and as a result the number of *gondang* associations increased to thirteen plus the ones mentioned above. During my 1994 field work I noted that there were nine *gondang* associations

<sup>19</sup> Interview with M.Nainggolan, Medan, August 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Nainggolan, a *sarune* player from Medan (October, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Interview with J. Nainggolan, the leader of the 'Gondang Maduma' from Medan. (October 1994.)

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Sembiring in Medan, June 1992.

in Medan and five outside Medan. Among the associations in Medan were the *Gondang Sitohang Bersaudara*, *Gondang Maduma*, *Gondang Pir Tondi Matogu*, Lembaga Kesenian Kampus IKIP Medan, Lembaga Kesenian USU Medan, Faber Napitupulu Group, *Gondang Martabe*, Hutagaol Group, and Marpaung Group. The others are *Gondang Dame Na Uli* (Pematang Siantar), *Gondang Nahornop* (Parapat), *Gondang Parsaoran Nauli* (Pematang Siantar), *Gondang Sinta Na Uli* (Porsea), *Amani Bunga Sinaga* (Palipi), *Sirait Group* (Laguboti), and *Parmalim Huta Tinggi* (Laguboti).

As mentioned previously, *gondang* associations are a the product of Toba Batak culture in post-Independent Indonesia. As *Amani Bunga Sinaga* from Palipi confirmed, there were no *gondang* associations previously; musicians were always members of villages who always available whenever needed to perform *gondang* in ceremonies. It was an obligation for *gondang* musicians to accompany any ceremonies that needed *gondang* accompaniment; indeed it was regarded as an honour to be asked. They were not paid for their performance but were always given a *jambar* (portion of meat') for their trouble.<sup>23</sup>

### **Adat for Contemporary Protestant Toba Batak**

In summary, many Toba Batak people practise *adat*, even though they have embraced monotheistic religion, experienced colonial powers and education, and become urbanized, many people still practise *adat*, though the ways they practise it differs. Some interpret the practice of pre-Christian Toba Batak *adat* according to Christian teachings. This is evident in *gondang* performances at church functions hosted by Protestant and Catholic Toba Batak and in the case of 'enculturation' in the church liturgy within the Catholic Toba Batak. Others refuse to believe in the magic quality of *adat*; while yet others remain unsure of how *adat* should be practised. For some, *adat* is not static but dynamic and changeable; for others, it should never be changed.

Some people feel that many aspects of *adat* which developed centuries ago are no longer compatible with modern life in the cities (cf. Sianipar 1973: 11).<sup>24</sup> As a result, they have dismissed some *adat* practices while practise others but in shortened form. For example, ceremonies which formerly took a few days to perform are now completed in a single day.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, many hosted pre-funeral ceremonies (*saur matua*) without giving *gondang sabangunan* performances but brass band music. Some even refuse to perform *adat* feasts including the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. The director of Tarutung School of Ministry, the *pendeta* Hutauruk, unconditionally rejects the *dalihan natolu*, the exhumation of bones and pre-funeral ceremonies and the use of the *gondang*, *tor-tor*, and *ulos* for these ceremonies. To him, the *adat* and its practices are evil that the Christians must avoid them (Hutauruk 1996: 9-30 ff).<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, many still perform *adat* ceremonies in case, they say, ancestral spirits do exist and if so to ensure that they are in a position to avoid punishment. This is evident in the contemporary exhumation of bones and pre-funeral ceremonies. During my fieldwork in 1989, 1991, 1992, and 1994, I met many Catholic and Protestant Toba Batak people living both in rural and urban areas who, no matter whether they were well-educated or not, or were rich or poor preserved, and practised the old belief system and its rituals.<sup>27</sup> As the church minister Gultom points out, many Toba Batak these days confess that they are Christians but that they still believe in the spirit world and practise spirit worship; he condemned them for asking musicians to play *gondang* piece in the name of the God while using the music to dance the *tor-tor* in front of a deceased, or exhumed bones, and to attract blessings (*sahala*) from these objects (Gultom 1991: 35-46).

<sup>23</sup> Interview with *Amani Bunga Sinaga* at Palipi, Samosir (October 1994).

<sup>24</sup> See also the article "Adat Perkawinan Batak dan Kepercayaan Pra-Kristen" (Batak Wedding Ceremony and Pre-Christian Belief System') in *Bonanipinasa* (1990: Vol.2.No.12 pp.20-22) and "Mengembalikan Adat Batak, Pekerjaan yang Sia-sia" ('Restoring Adat Practices to Its Original Form is a Wasting Time') in *Bonanipinasa* (1992:Vol. 3 No. 25.pp.20-21);

<sup>25</sup> The Rector of the Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Mauritus Simatupang, is of the same opinion. His comment is recorded in an article entitled, "Adat perkawinan Batak dan Kepercayaan Pra-Kristen" ('Batak Wedding Ceremonies and Pre-Christian belief Systems') in *Bonanipinasa* (1990, Vol. 2.No. 12. pp. 20-22).

<sup>26</sup> Further comment by Hutauruk on *adat* can be found in his book entitled *Adat Batak* (1996), (n.p). The book was published in Tarutung, but it is for "internal" (probably church) use only. It cannot be purchased in Book shops. However, the author can be contacted via Kotak Pos 48, Tarutung 22411 Tapanuli Utara, Sumatera Utara.

<sup>27</sup> About 30 years ago the same situation occurred. According to Bruner, during the 1960s all segments of Toba Batak society--including medical doctors, professors, farmers, linguists, poets, and even Christian ministers--performed exhumation of bone ceremonies and *tugu* feasts to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor* (Bruner 1987: 137; cf. Tampubolon 1968: 1).

In an interview between Tempo journalist and Dr. Nababan (the former leader of the H.K.B.P), Nababan openly opposed religious practices of *adat* and the *gondang* performance associated with spirit calling. He asserted that:

*Adat yang berbau animisme harus diinjilkan ... Misalnya, tempatkan gondang sebagai alat hiburan yang mengiringi kita manortor atau menari... Jika itu jadi alat memanggil roh, HKBP melarang gondang masuk gereja. Kami mau menerima adat tetapi isinya sudah dinapasi kekristenan.*

(‘*Adat* practices which are associated with animism must be adjusted to the message of the Gospel; The *gondang* must be used only to accompany people when dancing the *tor-tor* for entertainment, otherwise the church disallows the *gondang* to be played in church functions. We [the ministers of H.K.B.P.] will accept *adat* only if its contents have been fully Christianized” (anon, *Tempo*, 1987: XVII, No. 36, pp. 79).

As the leader of a huge Protestant congregation, Nababan’s statement represents the attitude of the H.K.B.P institution as well as all the congregation. Yet, in practice his statement neither prevents Protestants from performing *adat* in a non-religious setting nor from performing *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor* in order to worship the spirits of the ancestors. This is evident in the case of contemporary *adat* feasts which are taken seriously by some contemporary Protestant Toba Batak.

Not only Nababan but also other church leader such as Siahaan, Nainggolan, Simamora, Hutagalung, and the late Andar Lumbantobing hold to this view.<sup>28</sup> To them, *adat* practices are merely means of social communication and the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor* are tools with which to convey Toba Batak cultural expressions. Even though these musical traditions were passed on by the pre-Christian ancestors, they encourage church congregations to employ the *gondang* music in church liturgy, providing that it must be consecrated by a church minister before it is performed.

What, then, does *adat* mean to the contemporary Protestants? It is, indeed, difficult to answer this question, since *adat* to them does not imply fixed rules, perceptions, or laws. *Adat* itself is changing with the needs of its practitioners. To some, *adat* is no more than a collection of old-fashioned and irrational habits. Taking regard of Christian teachings they may select certain elements of *adat*, or add some elements to *adat*. They may also remove or change some elements of *adat* to make them compatible with Christianity. *Adat* practitioners who profess to be Christian feel that they must concern themselves with Christian values when practising *adat*. They also have to face the “Order of Discipline” of the church that regulates their *adat* practices., especially as regards the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*. Failure to obey the “Order of Discipline” of the church may incur its disciplinary action. To them, the “Order of Discipline” has essentially become the new *adat* and they must therefore consult it before practising any element of traditional *adat*.

To other Protestant Toba Batak, however, the *adat* practices are understood basically as spiritual demands. They simply practise *adat* because they believe in the supernatural power of *adat* and it can bring prosperity, good health, and many descendants. They need to practise *adat* because it is via *adat* practices that they can maintain good relationships with their relatives and most importantly with the ancestral spirits.<sup>29</sup> They believe that *adat* protects their status within their lineages and social relations.<sup>30</sup> In addition, since they do not want to be accused of being *nasomaradat* (lit., ‘ignorant of *adat*), i.e., humiliated, they must be mindful of *adat* practices and values.<sup>31</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that some Protestants Toba Batak these days perform pre-funeral ceremonies in which they dance the *tor-tor* in front of the deceased while asking blessings from the corpse. Some Protestants also put exhumed ancestral bones on top of their heads while dancing the *tor-tor* to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan* during an exhumation of

<sup>28</sup> I interviewed these leaders in Medan and Pematang Siantar (November and December 1994 and January 1995). Andar Lumbantobing was the former Bishop of the G.K.P.I. (He died in 1997.) Siahaan was his Secretary General; they both reside in Medan. Nainggolan, who is an expert of *adat* practices, also resides in Medan. Simamora is the G.K.P.I priest who lives in Jalan Sei Agul, Medan and Hutagalung is the G.K.P.I priest who lives in Pematang Siantar.

<sup>29</sup> See also Ch.P. Silalahi-Hutapea’s article entitled, “Pesta Tahunan di Silahi na Bolak” (‘The Annual Ceremony at the Village of Silahi na Bolak’) in *Bonanipinasa* (1994, Vol.5. No. 53, pp.17-18); and an article entitled, “Pembangunan Tugu, Apa Salahnya?” (‘What is Wrong with Erecting Monuments?’), *Bonanipinasa* (1989, Vol.1.No.2.p.47).

<sup>30</sup> See an article “Jangan Sampai Melunturkan Nilai-Nilai Filosofis” (‘Avoid Contamination in Philosophical Values [of Adat]’) *Bonanipinasa* (1990, Vol.2.No. 10.p.13).

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed discussion about ignorant of *adat* see the article entitled “Nasomaradat” in *Bonanipinasa* (1994, Vol. 5, No. 53, p16).

bones ceremony. They call these practices *adat*. Many, too, practice *adat* so that they can maintain their social relationships (Sianipar 1973: 13-14).<sup>32</sup>

What does all this mean? It means in one sense that *adat* has changed, because the people have changed. Yet, in a sense its meaning, function, and practice remain the same for those who still care for the survival of the pre-Christian Toba Batak *adat*. *Adat* which was once seemed to be stable and impervious to change has turned out to be flexible, for it depends on time, place, religion and its practitioners' knowledge of *adat*. In contemporary Protestant Toba Batak society, people have the option as to whether or not to practise *adat*; it is not an absolute obligation but a matter of personal choice.

## Conclusion

Contact with Christian missionaries and the Dutch colonial government was the embryo of major social, cultural, and religious change in Toba Batak society. Eventually, the prolonged tenure of these two agents of change come to an end, but by then Toba Batak religious life had been transformed, with the majority becoming Christian. People drifted from the rural areas to the towns and cities, developed of the church in rural and urban areas, and witnessed an educational, economic, and technological transformation. *Adat* still survives to this day. The concept of *marga* as constituting one's personal and family identity, the implementation of *dalihan na tolu* in *adat* feasts, the performance of pre-funeral ceremonies, exhumation of bones ceremonies as well as *tugu* feasts, and the performance of the *gondang sabangunan* and the *tor-tor* in these ceremonies and other *adat* practices held in urban and rural areas are still important. Urban clan associations whose activity mostly centers on *adat* practices and whose members are mostly educated people serve as a means of maintaining *adat*. Despite the fact that *adat* always remains *adat*, its practices have changed considerably since the 1860s; the extent of *adat* observance differs not only between the pre-Christian Toba Batak society and the contemporary Toba Batak society, but also between Christians Protestants who selectively practise *adat* practices and tend to secularize others.

Thus, for most Protestant Toba Batak, embracing Christianity does not mean denying their ancestral traditions; indeed, Christianity serves to strengthen their Toba Batak identity. Christian practices do not replace their ancestral traditions; on the contrary, elements of both coexist. It is this coexistence that expresses itself in contemporary performances of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tor-tor*.

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<sup>32</sup> The same opinion is also asserted by the H.K.B.P *pendeta*, B.T.P. Purba. His opinion is recorded in the article "Orang Batak Kristen Mengalami Krisis Identitas" ("The Christian Toba Batak experienced Identity Crisis") in *Bonanipinasa*, 1990, Vol. 2. No. 10. pp. 18-19).

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