

## CHAPTER TWO

### TRADITIONAL BATAK EDUCATION

Until the Rhenish Mission came to the Bataklands in 1861, the Bataks had no experience with the tightly structured western or modern education of today, i.e. with the exception of a few places in its southern part under Dutch authority.<sup>1</sup> But this does not mean that the Bataks had no educational and instructional activities at all. Just as was the general case with other tribal groups, the Bataks too had traditional/informal educational institutions and activities. Distinctive *values, knowledge and skills* were handed on from one generation to another. We will trace this process in outline fashion here.

#### ***A. An Overview of Traditional Batak Society***

In order to simplify our task of tracing traditional Batak education, first of all we shall present an overview of the structure of life in Batak society.<sup>2</sup>

For thousands of years the Batak forefathers dwelled in the region around Lake Toba. They

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<sup>1</sup>Brugmans (*Geschiedenis* [History], p. 229) notes that in the Mandailing area after 1843, there were several village schools (*sekolah negorij*) run by local citizens at the initiative and support of local Dutch officials. M.O. Parlindungan, *Tuanku Rao* (1964), pp. 391f, mentions a *Sikola Agong* [Noble School [which according to him was organized by the Dutch controller in Kotanopan in 1838. Although the schools quality was very elementary, they followed a western pattern since they were founded by Dutch colonial officials. E.S. Harahap, *Perihal Suku Bangsa Batak* [Tribal Batak Matters] (1960), p. 64, notes that there were schools in the Batak area before the coming of the Dutch. These taught reading, writing, singing, etc., but this statement lacks historical proof and is confused with *hadatuon*, an exclusive instructional institution (*infra*, section E).

<sup>2</sup>This subject has been studied extensively by both western and Indonesian scholars. The study published most recently was done by Sitor Situmorang, *Toba Na Sae*, Jakarta 1993. Much of our analysis has utilized his work.

founded a small close-knit village called a *huta*. In the beginning this was at Sianjur Mula-mula, in the Sagala-Limbong valley at the foot of the legendary Pusukbuhit on the west side of Lake Toba.<sup>3</sup> From there they spread out to the whole area which we know as the Batakland.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>There are many opinions and hypotheses concerning the origin of the Bataks and their coming to the Lake Toba region; cf. below note number 55. The Batak people themselves have their own myth about their origins, and stories which explain their presence, which in turn gave rise to the designation of their *tarombo*, genealogy, of their margas. Situmorang (*Toba Na Sae*, pp. 17-21) summarizes the various hypotheses and at the same time explains the relationships to the Bataks' short-cut effort of cosmogonic-myth making relative to the history of their presence around Lake Toba.

<sup>4</sup> S. Situmorang, *op. cit.*, pp. 25f. Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been extensive migration from the Batak homeland; cf. C.E. Cunningham, *The Postwar Migration of the Toba Bataks to East Sumatra* (1959), pp. 37ff.

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The increase in the number of hutas was based primarily upon the need for agricultural land and places to erect dwellings. Because the old village with its distinctive form and structure could not be enlarged, the increase in population required the opening of new farm land and the building of additional villages. Founding new villages was initiated by special people called *sipungka huta* (village founders) or *sisuan bulu* (literally, the planter of bamboo, since the latter formed a rampart around the village). Generally, the founder of the new village became the *raja huta* (village king, or chief). Therefore, the *raja huta* was considered *primus inter pares* (the first among equals). He was not the sole and highest authority as is customarily known in the government and order of feudalistic society. Leadership in the huta was collective with the chieftain sharing territorial and governing leadership with a certain number of *pangituai ni huta* (elders or prominent people in the community).<sup>5</sup>

In subsequent developments, the increased numbers of Bataks felt the need to relate themselves with clans, i.e. to have *marga*.<sup>6</sup> The *marga* formed a closely connected fellowship of persons who considered themselves *sabutuha* (literally: womb companions) or of the same blood based on genealogical structure and a specific line of descent.<sup>7</sup> In referring to the creation myth and the

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<sup>5</sup> Situmorang, *op. cit.*, p. 169f.

<sup>6</sup> According to Situmorang (*ibid.*, pp. 39f and 56f) the need and tradition of *marga* organization emerged gradually. It occurred without compulsion, and was largely in place from about the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This conclusion is based on a calculation of generations (*sundut*) which for each are known to go back 20 or so generations. But before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which Situmorang calls "pre-generational period", the genealogical principle was already developing which acknowledged a common descent acted as a unity, within and without, opening and dominating a particular region.

<sup>7</sup> There is no need to debate whether people of each *marga* actually are descendants from a single progenitor. *Margas* are not absolutely related to tracing a line of biological descent. According to W.K.H. Ypes, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van stamverwantschap, de inheemsche rechtsgemeenschappen en het grondrecht der Toba-en Dairi-Bataks* [Contribution towards the Knowledge of Genealogical Relationships of the Indigenous Legal Communities and the Basic Law of the Toba and Dairi Bataks] (1932), pp. 9ff, there are six possible channels or processes of

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origins of the Bataks, each person was able to see in the origin of each marga his/her own position within both the marga and the whole Batak society. This myth itself involved both religious practice and liturgical dimensions, so that - as Schreiner said -each marga formed "worship communities through which their members from time to time strengthen their unity one with another and fellowship ties with the progenitors through eating cultic meals together." <sup>8</sup>

However, in addition to the social-genealogical and religious-cultic dimensions, there was also the territorial one: each marga, at least during former times, possessed and was bound to a specific territory (*huta* or an area more extensive than the village) and on the other hand each territory formed a valid area for that particular marga. Of course, there was no village which was dwelled in by but just one marga, especially so because of the exogamous marriage principle (which requires the man to marry a woman from another clan). For each village or wider area, there was a main clan, i.e. the marga of the founding father, *sipungka huta*, or *sisuan bulu*, already mentioned. The secondary marga in the village is the *marga boru*, i.e. the marga of the man who marries a daughter from the founding father's clan, but he remains a full member of the primary marga in agreement with the structure of *dalihan na tolu*.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there is the *paisolat* or *parripe* (guest) marga whose members must be subservient to the primary marga.<sup>10</sup>

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forming margas: (1) the genealogical line, the one most common; (2) the most exceptional: (a) by way of adoption; (b) birth outside of marriage; (= adultery) where the marga receives the child as its own; (c) through specific events or ceremonies; (d) through dispersal outside of the home area (*bona pasogit*), where the marga membership multiplies markedly, or a marga which is assimilated into another; and (e) through a violation of the principle of exogamy, i.e. marrying within the same marga, so that a new marga is begun.

<sup>8</sup> L. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium* [Adat and Gospel] (1972), pp. 119-122.

<sup>9</sup>Dalihan Natolu (literally: the three hearth-stones) is the three functional groups which form the Batak society, i.e. dongan sabutuha (marga companions), hula-hula (bride-giver marga, or daughter giving group for marriage), and boru (bride-taker marga, or daughter receiving group for marriage).

<sup>10</sup> S. Situmorang, in *op. cit.*, p. 48, 169ff; and in

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Each village led by the village chief (lit. *raja* = king) and with the elders (*pangituai*), comprise an area with full sovereignty. "In the institution of the huta there is the guarantee of full citizenship with clear rights and responsibilities based on the principle of inter-linkage which integrates the genealogical with the territorial principle. The village chief as leader exercises management over various social and economic matters according to the wisdom of the policy of discussion to reach a consensus, nevertheless in the final analysis he has the authority to make decisions on his own responsibility based on stipulations of the adat."<sup>11</sup>

However, each village was not totally separated from others. Many needs required contact and a network of cooperation between villages, both those which involved adat ceremonies more extensive than the village, and also those related to economic matters (including regulating and dividing *golat*, plots of land), and matters involving maintenance of security. For those purposes, the villages located near each other formed a federation. At the most elementary level, there is the *horja* which deals with incidental and ceremonial matters.<sup>12</sup> The *bius* is at a higher and more permanent level, and forms an association of villages and margas which are in proximity both territorially and in terms of family relationships.

The Batak adat law recognizes two categories of leadership or office at the level of huta, horja, and bius. At the huta level, the leader deals with secular problems, whereas the horja has a leader who manages the fulfilment of religious laws. In other words, there are secular and religious officials. The latter category is most clearly known at the bius level. With reference to the secular affairs officials, Sitor Situmorang makes the following explanation:

The highest authority for the bius rests in a council whose membership is filled by marga members with one representative from each marga. Thus, the total membership varies from

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"Assosiasi Klan Batak Toba di Jakarta: Bukan Marga tapi Lahir dari Tradisi Bermarga" [Toba Batak Clan Associations in Jakarta: Not Margas but Born Out of the Marga Tradition], in *Prisma* (Indonesian edition), no. 6, 1983, pp. 81-88.

<sup>11</sup> S. Situmorang, *Toba Na Sae*, p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 47 and 80.

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buis to buis. Together, they become a forum for discussion which is able to act also as a governing body both "internally and externally", becoming a symbol of its regional sovereignty. In order to emphasize the governing dimension of the council, the members are usually called buis chiefs, a term which indicates complexity.

As a council they have authority over the horjas which sent them there as the representatives of each marga. The buis council has responsibility for security, execution of laws, for guaranteeing the integrity of regional borders, for justice, and for handling the most important infrastructures for the economy, such as irrigation and the markets (*onan*).

In the operation of the buis council, there is one person who acts as the main leader, chairing the meetings, and representing the sovereignty of the buis both within its area and beyond. This official is known by various names depending upon the area involved: *Raja Junjungan* (in Silindung), *Raja Doli* (in Samosir), and so on. The other members of the buis council are called *raja partahi*. As members of the 'cabinet', each of these is responsible for specific matters.

The horjas which are under the buis are governed by a meeting of the marga which is made up of elders, but the meeting status is informal and *ad hoc*... The authority of the meeting of the marga is subservient to that of the buis.

Governing day to day affairs is accomplished by the village chiefs, the heads of village government. Their numbers would be in the teens in the horja, and in the tens in the buis. The village chiefs form a category of secular officials at the lowest level who guarantee the operation of government matters of most concern to each citizen... The institution of the huta and the village chief are identical. Each's status and authority is inherited and without termination, and is held by a person in a direct line of descent with the founder of the village, thus making this the only stable element in the governmental structure of the buis.<sup>13</sup>

Thanks to the division of work for the *buis*, *horja* and *huta*, there are persons or secular affairs officials who are "professional" in each's field: the controller of the water channels (*bondar*), the supervisor of the market (*onan*) responsible for the enforcement of market laws (including those related to the standardization of weights and measurements and the collection of taxes (*bongbong*), and as we shall see in the next section, a teacher of the community (*raja patik*) in his capacity as legal advisor.

The religious affairs officials who functioned in religious ceremonies especially at the buis level were called *raja-raja parbaringin*. In harmony with the belief system of the ancient Bataks which was integrated into the ways of seeking a livelihood, especially agriculture, there were a series of rites throughout the Batak calendar year (cf. below), led by the *parbaringin* chieftains. Situmorang explains their function as follows:

These parbaringin were religious leaders (*pendeta*) who throughout the year prepared and led

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80f, 155f, 160.

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various kinds of rituals for each stage of rice cultivation. Because they were called chiefs also (*raja*), this was a clear indication that their responsibilities were considered government related. Even though the relationship was not directly part of tribal government, nevertheless the function itself was utterly essential.

Throughout almost the whole year of twelve months, there were a host of sacred rituals, great and small, related to rice cultivation directed towards the guaranteeing of a bountiful harvest and were practised by each family or the whole community as a collective .... All of these took place under the supervision of the parbaringin as spiritual leaders who were guided by the *pustaha* (a manual of ritual and dates) which determined the schedule and procedures for carrying out the various ceremonies ....

The calendar for celebrations illustrated the scope and extent of the parbaringins' function within the *bius*. In addition to the religious dimensions of their responsibilities, in essence they were involved in the progress of the whole agricultural enterprise also, making sure of the coordination and synchronization of the demands of the seasons and ecological situation. As religious leaders, their personal lives were bound up with the disciplines of "holy personhood". In their religious activities and personal life, the parbaringin formed a class, more exactly, an exemplary 'caste', being moral and spiritual leaders for other persons.

Theirs was an especially tight organization. It was permanent, characterized by a clear division of leadership functions among the members .... The parbaringin organization and offices within it were filled by candidates or representatives from the *bius* clans .... The office of parbaringin itself was hereditary, that is the office of each parbaringin would be passed on to his eldest son ....

As the main authority for the "agricultural calendar", their functions bridged the gap between worldly and supernatural authority also .... 'Hidden' behind the secular structure, the parbaringin, through their organization, were the guarantors of the integrity and identity of the *bius*, and the chosen leaders to maintain cultural continuity (agriculture) and the esthetical-religious order of rituals with dance and sacred music performances.<sup>14</sup>

In the basic structure of traditional Batak society as described above, the Bataks were involved in educational activities. The foundation of their traditional societal structure and educational system was the *Adat*, as will be explained briefly in the next section.

### ***B. Adat as A System Comprehending All Areas of Life***

Several times in the analysis above, there has been occasion to mention the term "adat": adat law, adat chief, etc. What does adat mean? For Bataks, as also for many other tribal groups, adat is not merely certain customary usages or social regulations, but rather something which comprehends the whole dimension of life: physical and spiritual, present and future, interpersonal relations and relationships with the creator, *Mulajadi, Sang Pencipta*, the maintenance of harmony between the self as a micro-cosmos and also with the whole universe, the macro-cosmos.

To help us understand the Batak adat as a totality, we shall quote from L. Schreiner who obtained his insights from western specialists in religion and ethnology and also from Batak leaders themselves:

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 168, 178.

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Adat is the concrete form of the total character of tribal religions. It involves, infuses and determines the life of the tribe or ancient peoples in a host of ways. The adat connects the visible living with the invisible dead. Adat is the social order of the village as a community under law, as a community of producers, and as a religious fellowship. As a social order of divine origin with a threefold manifestation, i.e. myth, ritual and genealogical groups, the adat cares for and maintains both the life of law and economics, as well as the vitality of the individual and corporate life. Adat originates in myth, but its power is rooted in natural law with a goal of eternal harmony between the macro and micro cosmos .... Adat has a normative character because it has a foundation in myth which forms the way the ancient people understood their world. Thus it is the external side and the casuistic elaboration of myth in the communal life and its implementation in all areas of life. And myth is the way people express their experiences in the world, their way of knowing the world and their power over that world. Therefore, in the final analysis, adat may be defined as the *epitome* of the closed world of ancient peoples with its total character.<sup>15</sup>

If we adapt Schreiner's conclusion to the Batak adat, then we are able to see that the totality of the adat reflects both the Bataks' world view (*Weltanschauung*) and their view towards life.<sup>16</sup> As well as their ideals for becoming genuine and perfect human beings both individually, and communally.

In the practice of daily life, the adat is manifested in a series of rituals<sup>17</sup> and regulations<sup>18</sup>. Each ritual is

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<sup>15</sup> Schreiner, *op. cit.*, p. 275. A similar type of understanding is evident among younger missionaries of the Rhenish Batak Mission, among others, Ed. Müller; for example see his writing in the *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* [Rhenish Mission News] 1930, especially p. 363.

<sup>16</sup> J. Winkler in his article, "Die Weltanschauung der heidnischen Batak", in the magazine, *Deutsche Wacht*, Batavia, April 1919, pp. 195-210, explains that the Batak world view arose out of their daily experiences and spiritual needs. But in a view similar to Rhenish missionaries in general, he too drew the conclusion that the Batak world view in essence was rooted in *animism*.

<sup>17</sup> There are many types of rites. In addition to those related to the agricultural calendar which was attended to by the *parbaringin* already mentioned, there were also a series of "rites of passage", i.e. birth, the young, marriage and death, and those involving various other activities in life.

<sup>18</sup> The Bataks have various terms to express "regulations": *Patik*, *uhum*, *ruhut*, and occasionally *adat* also, whose understanding is felt to be overlapping, so that it is difficult to find a comparable word in English with the same precise meaning for each term. Observers have compiled classifications and inventories of the regulations which differ. This is the case because in the past all types of regulations were oral and based on the Batak conviction that just the spiritual power, *sahala*, of a regulation was embodied in its oral form (cf. below note 46) so that there are many variations of meaning according to place and situation of their usage.



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an institutionalization of the adat based upon detailed regulations. The adat as institutionalized in ritual becomes in turn both the educational organization and 'curriculum' for the community members who claim it for their own, practice it or follow its teachings.

Thus at the time of practising or following the ritual or adat ceremony, the individual is both experiencing education through the communication and acceptance of values, knowledge and skills, and at the same time caring for and maintaining the adat itself. In other words, during the carrying out of an adat ceremony, the educational process is going on in the form of "community education" and concurrently there is "education in action". Within the adat, the teaching-learning process can be seen in its intense and concrete form.

We are unable to divide the activities involved in the carrying out of the adat rituals in terms of the three mentioned educational categories, i.e. values, knowledge and skills, because all three are experienced in each type of adat activity.

Let us take the *wedding ceremony* as an example. In following the progress of this ritual, a Batak learns or is taught the religious, moral and social *values* of marriage, i.e. marriage as something sacred in harmony with the myth of Batak origins, marriage is something maintaining the existence of the marga and the continuation of the generations, and marriage is a change of social status from childhood to adulthood, and marriage is an event for the whole community and not merely something personal for the two marriage partners. The Batak learns or is taught various kinds of *knowledge* about the order and arrangements for carrying out the wedding ceremony, the steps which must be followed, the way to carry out each step, conditions which must be fulfilled, and the various instrumentalities which must be readied, etc. The marriage adat also practices or is trained in the *skills* of taking part in a series of steps of the ceremony, beginning with those most elementary to those which are most difficult and sophisticated requiring the highest skills.

Although, as indicated, we cannot describe each educational element in detail, we can mention various examples in each category as we shall describe in the next section. Again it must be stressed that the process of communicating all elements included in the three educational categories occur in the framework of the adat as total system comprehending all sides and dimensions of the life of the Bataks.

### ***C. Family and Social Education***

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As a tribe which highly prizes its collectivity expressed in the fellowship of *marga, huta, horja and bius*, each individual Batak and family is never an autonomous or independent unit. The existence, ideals, and activities of each person and family are not only parts of the wider community, they are determined by it. Thus family education done by parents with their children is a part of community education, both in terms of philosophy and content, but also in its process. Even so, within the framework of making observations about the Batak traditional education, we must discuss it under two different types while at the same time see that their mutual relationship are very close.

### 1. *Family Education and Value of the Child*

*Anakkonhi do na ummarga di au*

*Anakkonhi do hasangapon di au*

*Anakkonhi do hamoraon di au.*<sup>19</sup>

Thus we have the words of a song by Nahum Situmorang: *Anakkonhi do hasangapon di au*. According to certain Bataks<sup>20</sup>, the words represent the essence of the Batak understanding of the value of children, and at the same time it points to a primary motivation to teach or endeavour to teach children as much as possible. On the other hand, there are those who hold that the ideas of the song are modern expressions, and

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<sup>19</sup> Translation: "My child is most valuable to me; my child is my honor; my child is my riches". Each line of the quotation forms the final line of each verse which was preceded by expressions which portrayed the struggles and sacrifices of the parents to make possible the highest education for their children to achieve. See Nahum Situmorang, *Nahum Songs* (1971), Vol. 1, pp. 31ff.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Liberty Manik; in conversation with this writer September 9, 1985.

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therefore do not represent an original Batak view.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of which view is correct, there is no question but that Bataks place a very high value on children, and this high value is connected closely with three clusters of Bataks' highest ideals: *hamoraon* (wealth) *hagabeon* (fecundity), and *hasangapon* (honor or glory).<sup>22</sup> Basically all three rest upon the deepest yearning for power (*songti; sangti; hasongtion*).

After dwelling on the Bataks' religious philosophy and view of life, Parkin concludes that power is their principal interest or yearning. Life is a struggle for power and also a struggle against powers, both ordinary or normal power, and also its paranormal expression. Symbolic ornamentation of their houses and so forth are expressions of power or forces on which they rely to protect their lives. Furthermore, religious ceremonies which are characterized by magic, in essence are attempts to obtain 'divine' power. The openness of Bataks to influences and contributions from the outside, both Hindu and Christian (and modern knowledge too, author), is motivated basically by the desire to obtain power and to strengthen it afterwards.<sup>23</sup>

The value of the child together with the Bataks' cluster of ideals are related closely to the Batak family structure and community which we have discussed. As we have seen, the Batak community considers itself to have originated from a noble ancestor, *si Raja Batak* who grouped them into clans (*marga*). Each *marga* possesses and is bound to a certain territory, i.e. village (*huta*) whose beginning was pioneered by a certain individual, the *sisuan bulu* or *sipungka huta*

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with S. Situmorang, December 14, 1985.

<sup>22</sup> Van Asselt, *Achtien Jaren* [Eighteen Years], p. 86, relates his conversation with chieftains in Sarulla during the first year of his presence there (1857). One of them, Amani Holing, stressed that the Batak goal of life was wealth, honor or respect, glory and a long life.

<sup>23</sup> H. Parkin, *The Extent and Areas of Indian/Hindu Influence on the Ideas and Development of Toba-Batak Religion and Its Implications for the Christianization of the Toba-Batak People of North Sumatra* (D.Th. Dissertation, Serampore, 1975, p. 440; then published under the title *Batak Fruit of Hindu Thought*, 1987). Cf. P. Pedersen, *Batak Blood and Protestant Soul* (1975), p. 25, "It was the power, the promise of power, which first attracted the Batak to Christianity."

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who later became the village chief (*raja huta*).<sup>24</sup>

To found and develop a new village naturally requires the contribution of many committed people; it cannot be done merely by one founder and a coterie of fellow members (*dongan tubu*) of his marga. For such a significant venture, people hope for many children (*hagabeon*), not only boys as carriers of the hereditary line of the marga, but also girls. The latter are needed because girls will marry into another marga due to the exogamous marriage principle. The wife along with husband and children are assured of a right to live in the new village or settlement as *marga boru* and have a claim to a share of the arable marga land (*golat*). The more children including the marga boru, the greater amount of arable land which may be tilled by the residents of the huta made up of the principal marga (*marga raja*), the marga boru and the incoming marga (*paisolat* or *parripe*). This means that each marga as a totality and also individual members increase in wealth in children, wealth in land, and wealth in production. Therefore there is attained the goal of *hamoraon* (wealth). This increased wealth in turn gives the village members *hasangapon* (respect and honor).

The marga which has achieved fecundity, wealth and honor, obtains power also, not only physical and natural power, but power which is spiritual and supranatural as well. In so doing, the zenith of its hope has been attained. Situmorang describes it this way:

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<sup>24</sup>Each territory, i.e. the huta along with tillable land, in a formal sense is the property of the marga. After receiving a land allotment, each core family or individual has the right of working the part so allocated and enjoying its productivity, meaning that each member of the marga might become wealthy. But he does not have the right to sell his allotment to another person unless he intends to leave the village; but if he does so it must be a sale to a member of the marga. In fact for the traditional Batak, land is not a commodity of commerce, but rather an inheritance to be handed on to the next generation so that the conservation of land ownership and village by each marga may be maintained. Cf. S. Situmorang, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-50; and Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 and 32ff.

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Without having control over land, the marga and its members will be no more than a collection of unreal individuals, scattered about like so much sand without the opportunity to periodically celebrate their togetherness as a mystical body which praises/worships its founding father, offering up its sacrifice to him, and obtaining a blessing from the world of the ancestors, and at the same time guarantees and increases the glory of the revered ancestor who lives there eternally in spirit form (*tondi*) .... The spirit of the marga ancestor who was an important figure during his lifetime lives not only eternally but may receive a multiplication of the power of his (*sahala*), provided that his descendants faithfully and regularly take part in rituals of offerings to it. An increase in the *sahala* power of the primary ancestor will automatically guarantee and increase the success of his descendants, and so on.

The idea of the ancestor's *tondi* (spirit) and the *sahala* power which is held by the ancestors, embodied in the marga, forms the core for the Batak's view of life .... The marga as a mystical body represents the *tondi-power* mentioned. Important people in the marga, those who are honored as elders are viewed as standings for the *tondi-sahala* which exercises its mandate from the founding ancestor.<sup>25</sup>

In brief, the *sahala* power from the founding ancestor flows to the marga in its totality, and also to individual members of it who have many children, are wealthy, and respected, both in the present life and in the future.

A view of life such as this gives rise to the expression *lulu anak lulu tano* (to want children or to defend children is the same as seeking and defending a plot of land). Thus, the more children people have, the more the wealth of the marga is guaranteed, and the more honor and power is guaranteed for the marga also, including its individual members.<sup>26</sup>

Here too, we see a dialectical relationship between the individual member of the marga and the marga as a fellowship or community. Even though the emotional centre of Batak ideals is the marga, nevertheless the rights and importance of the individual are not neglected. Each individual of the marga is given the opportunity for self-development. This opens up the possibility for the occurrence of internal competition among its members, besides fostering intense inter-marga competition for the taking of tillable land.<sup>27</sup> Competition within the marga, a fact of life ever since the appearance of the first *sisuan bulu* or *sipungka huta*, prompts each person or core family to work as hard and as tenacious as possible. In

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<sup>25</sup> S. Situmorang, *op. cit.*, pp. 79f.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>27</sup> On this subject Situmorang as well as others have said: "The politics of obtaining control of land gives rise to competition and dynamics of relationships between margas, but competition is not less intense among individuals of the same marga who compete 'to carry out the marga's message'"; *op. cit.*, p. 58.

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the process of being involved in this hard work and competition, parents plant the main Batak ideals in the minds and hearts of their children, as well as the effort necessary to attain them. This effort and process in turn forms a certain type of character in the Bataks: the enjoyment of hard work, willingness to sacrifice to attain goals, and determination to succeed.<sup>28</sup> In short, each parent endeavours to implant in his/her children<sup>29</sup> religious and moral values, as well as the work ethic mentioned, in addition to various kinds of knowledge and skills.

However, competition within the marga is not so intense as to neglect or sacrifice its own solidarity. This is the case because each individual is very conscious of his or her part within the marga and aware too that the marga is the foundation for his or her development as a person. Therefore, marga members feel a sense of responsibility to maintain and advance the village and marga as a community, so that together they may embody the main ideals mentioned, and become superior to other villages and margas in all fields.

Inter-marga competition itself does not cancel cooperation between them, especially in matters related to the *horja* or *bius* which are multi-marga in essence. This cooperation is embodied in various group activities in the fields of agriculture, security, and religious affairs, etc., which are integrated into the structure of a total adat system. However, in reality competition between margas not infrequently issues in hostility and conflict between them. Such hostility and conflict may become values which are handed on in the process of family as well as social education.

Education within the family happened from the time of the child's birth. Of course the education taking place within the family was not the formal type occurring in the school, an

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<sup>28</sup> A.B. Sinaga, *The Toba-Batak High God* (1981), pp. 23f.

<sup>29</sup> Values and work ethic, including good manners, behaviour and various kinds of regulations which require discipline and obedience, usually are communicated through oral literature (*torsa-torsa* or folklore, for example or key words and proverbs, *huling-hulingan* or puzzles, games, etc.); see among others, A.A. Sitompul, *Weisheitliche Mahnsprüche und prophetische Mahnrede im Alten Testament* [Wisdom Admonitory Expressions and Prophetical Hortatory Sayings in the Old Testament] (dissertation 1967), pp. 31ff, and J. Warneck in *Der Bote*, October 1901, p. 220.

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institution not known by the Bataks before the coming of the western colonial power and the Christian mission. But this did not mean that parents did not teach their children as was assumed earlier.<sup>30</sup> Concerning its content, perhaps Loeb was correct when he said that "formerly the Batak children were mainly taught to imitate their parents".<sup>31</sup> But "imitate" has an extensive meaning here, because it involves following the religious, moral and social values of both the parents and the wider community, plus assuming their knowledge and skills. In addition they imitated their parents' character and general characteristics, both those which were positive as well as negative.<sup>32</sup> All of this required discipline and obedience, matters which were emphasized by the Rhenish mission educational system later.

Generally, boys imitated their fathers who tended to be active outside the house, whereas the girls imitated their mothers in helping with the household work and in the rice fields, and sometimes helping sell produce in the market. After puberty, the daughters' relationships with their fathers tended to become more distant. In summary, Batak children, both boys and girls, from the earliest were taught to work hard. In parallel with the need for children's help to increase the land under cultivation in order to increase wealth which would then be their inheritance later. In sum, children were viewed as a most highly valued human investment also.

But the value of children ought not to be understood solely from the economic perspective, that is, as workers, but also from the side of the Batak philosophy of life: the child must surpass

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<sup>30</sup> For example, A. Bruch, *Der Batak, wie er liebt und lebt* [The Batak, How He Loves and Lives] (1895), p. 17; also W. Gericke, "Einiges aus dem Leben und Treiben der Batakschen Jugend" [Something about the Life and Activities of Batak Youth], in *Der Kleine Missionsfreund*, no. 3, 1918, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> E.M. Loeb, *Sumatra, Its History and People* (1935), p. 66.

<sup>32</sup> Indeed there is a Batak proverb: *ndang dao tubis sian bonana*, which means that the characteristic and character of a child do not differ greatly from the parent. But E. Pasaribu in his unpublished autobiography, p. 8, says that Bataks do not want their children to experience difficulties or become victims of parental error. Because of that the parent is ready to improve himself for the sake of a better future for his

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the parent.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the child is both a source of honor (*hasangap-on*) and a means to perpetuate life, i.e. a preservation of the *tondi* or spirit of the parent, even though the body itself is no longer in existence. For that reason, each Batak person endeavours to have children, especially boys as the means for the continuation of the family line, in any way possible including polygamy.<sup>34</sup> For the sake of the children, the parent is ready to sacrifice everything for them.

For outside observers, including those from the Rhenish mission, the Batak parents' treatment of their children, especially boys, was felt to be excessive because they were not ready to take disciplinary action against their children even though they were doing wrong. According to some observers, if the parents disciplined their children, they worried that the child's *tondi* might leave its body (*tarmali tonidi*), a matter which could be tantamount to causing the child's death.<sup>35</sup> Because the parent had insufficient courage to discipline the child, the consequence were a rude child who was ready to treat the parent in any way he or she saw fit.<sup>36</sup> But other observers also noted that if

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children.

<sup>33</sup> The philosophy of *hamajuon* just began to be significant for Bataks after the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Chapter Six A.1.). But the desire to advance, even though this may be expressed differently, is rooted in the Bataks themselves, and forms one of the motivating factors to receive new elements from the outside, if these are viewed superior to what has been had beforehand, and can be useful in helping them attain their ideals.

<sup>34</sup> For Bataks, barrenness is disaster, even though not the greatest one. The man who is impotent is called *na so halak*, not a male, or *na so hasea*, incapable. M.H. Nasoetion, *De Plaats van de vrouw in de Bataksche Maatschappij* [The Place of Women in Batak Society] (dissertation 1943), p. 56; J.C. Vergouwen, *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra* (1964), p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Thus the view of J. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak* (1909), p. 11. According to him, such a conviction or anxiety forms one reflection of animistic belief.

<sup>36</sup> G. Warneck, *Nacht und Morgen auf Sumatra* [Night and Morning in Sumatra] (1872), p. 38, calls Batak children tyrannical towards their parents: cf. J. Warneck in *AMZ*, 1902, p. 313. Andar Lumbantobing in his article, "Christian Education in the Batak Church", in *Lutheran World* II, Autumn 1955, pp.



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the child's rudeness reached excessive proportions so the parent lost control of his anger, the child could be disciplined harshly, an action termed barbaric and inhuman.<sup>37</sup> Such an overly harsh judgment might fall upon an adult daughter who refused to marry the young man chosen by the parents, and the judgment might become even more severe if she eloped with a person of her own choice.

Basically each Batak child was taught to respect and obey its parents. According to ancient Batak belief, such honor and obedience became the guarantee that the sacred power (*sahala*)<sup>38</sup> of the parent would be transferred to his children while the parent was still alive, and particularly so after the parent was deceased.<sup>39</sup> But in reality, there were many Batak children who were obstinate and rude, rebellious and insubordinate toward their parents, meaning that the observation of the Rhenish missionaries was not altogether in error.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless according to some Batak parents, obstinacy, and other negative actions, do not have their root cause in parents' fear that if they act angrily towards him or her, the child's tondi will flee, but rather because such behaviour is a general characteristic of the younger generation among all tribes and nationalities, i.e. a defiant

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291-296, is of the same opinion as Warneck about father and child when he writes, "The child does not obey the order of the parent, but the parent will do everything desired by the child."

<sup>37</sup> A. van Ophuysen, "Der Lebenslauf einer batakischen Frau" [The Career of a Batak Wife] in *MB*, 1911, pp. 53ff.

<sup>38</sup> Sinaga, *op. cit.*, p. 233, defines *sahala* as "power of the soul and its authority which is seen as a living and effective power in real manifestation".

<sup>39</sup> *Sahala* in its relationship to honoring parents has its source in the *Si Boru Deak Parujar* myth, the myth about the mother of *Si Raja Batak*. This mother guarantees material and spiritual well-being for descendants who honor her, through channelling her *sahala* to them.

<sup>40</sup> In translating the Fifth Commandment, Johannsen as an Old Testament translator uses the word *ingkon* (must), a word which is not used in other parts of the Law. On the one hand it seems that he intended to strengthen a basic attitude of Bataks, i.e. to honor and obey parents, and on the other hand to struggle against the arbitrariness of children towards their parents as witnessed by the missionaries.

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attitude, ready to rebel against all parental restraints. What is more, within Batak society, although the child is loved greatly, it has no clearly defined role. It is merely an object of adat, education, etc., and only becomes a subject when an adult, specifically when married.

It cannot be denied that as a result of a patrilineal pattern of society, Bataks valued sons higher than daughters. But in daily life the responsibilities and work of women were much greater, including the education of the family. Although after the son had become older he was closer to his father, yet during his early years he was nurtured primarily by his mother.

In terms of this reality, people had a right to the opinion that this condition was proof of the exploitation of women; their work and responsibilities were greater than the men's, but it was just the men who enjoyed most of the fruits of women's efforts. Yet in this case, it needs to be remembered that according to ancient Batak belief as reflected in the *Si Boru Deak Parujar* myth, for example, the position of women was very high and they were greatly respected.<sup>41</sup> And each Batak including those who live in the present regardless of his or her educational achievement, definitely acknowledges the role of each's mother education. This was in no way the mere result of the natural instinct of a mother, but it was more than that: Batak society gave specific means and provisions to its women so that they might bear such great responsibility and carry out their various functions including that of teaching their children.

## *2. Community Education*

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<sup>41</sup> The high position of women based on the myth of *Si Boru Deak Parujar* has been analyzed thoroughly by Nasoetion, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-20. In a further development, respect for women is directed to the *hula-hula* as the clan side which gives the wife. In the Batak belief system which forms the foundation for respecting the *hula-hula* there is noted a justification something like this: *Debata Mulajadi na Bolon* as the giver of the wife, *Si Boru Deak Parujar* to *Si Raja Ihat Manisia*, father of *Raja Batak*, is more honored than *Si Boru Deak Parujar* herself. In other words the position of *Debata Mulajadi na Bolon* is about the same as the *hula-hula* in the *dalihan na tolu* structure.

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According to the myth and oral tradition of the Bataks, each person was obligated to know and practice *Sisia-sia Na Lima* (a five-fold teaching): *Mardebata* (belief in God), *Martutur* (treasuring kinship relationships), *Marpatik* (carrying out regulations), *Maruhum* (respect for law), and *Maradat* (highly valuing the adat).<sup>42</sup> Fundamentally, it can be said that Maradat comprehends the other four in itself.

Basically those responsible for teaching *Sisia-sia Na Lima* to children, i.e. the non-married, were the parents of each child, or in a general way each adult married member of the community. But Batak society also knew of a "professional", the *Raja Patik* who had the role of imparting the five teachings to the community.

In the myth of *Si Raja Batak* (the Batak Patriarch) - having many versions and variations because there has been neither canonization nor standardization - it is said that he had two sons: *Guru Tatea Bulan* (also called *Raja Ilontungon*) and *Raja Isumbaon*. Through *Si Boru Deak Parujar* (mother of *Si Raja Batak*) and *Si Raja Batak, Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon* (The High Creator God, the highest deity in the Batak religion) bequeathed the *Pustaka Agong* to *Guru Tatea Bulan*. This was a book, with pages made of bark, containing *hadatuon*, *habeguon*, *parmonsahon* and *pangaliluon* (shamanism, courageous power, art of self-defense, and the science of deceit). However, to *Raja Isumbaon*, he bequeathed *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* containing *Sisia-sia Na Lima* (the five-fold teaching above). (Another version of the latter has a different content: *harajaon*, *parumaon*, *partiga-tigaon* and *paningaon*, i.e. kingdom, legislation, agriculture, trade, and handicraft skill.) If the *Pustaka Agong* is always found in written form because its content is a 'science' demanding precision (see below), then *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* is preserved only in oral form because its further development is not known and therefore apparently lost.<sup>43</sup>

Several decades ago, there was a Batak figure, Nahum Tampubolon, who used the title *Raja Patik*, so that afterwards he became known as *Raja Patik Tampubolon*, because he succeeded in composing a book entitled *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* (1964) which he claimed contained all the *Habatahon* (Batak system). The purpose of the writing was to prove that *Habatahon* was a system based on a 'holy' or religious Book.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> According to S. Situmorang, *op. cit.*, p. 161f, the *parbaringin* are most obligated to practice the Five Laws. But as indicated, not they but the *Raja Patik* is to teach these extensively to the members of the community.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. W. M. Hoetagaloeng, *Poestaha taringot toe Tarombo ni Bangso Batak* [Book regarding the genealogical line of the Batak] (1926), p. 28, and M. H. Nasoetion, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Schreiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 173f. On pp. 164-213, Schreiner painstakingly analyzes the figure of *Raja Patik Tampubolon* together with his work. At the same time Situmorang himself in a conversation on December 14, 1985 evaluates Tampubolon as a most prominent Batak ideologue and as a traditional Batak educator

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In his daily life, Raja Patik spoke or taught in places where many people gathered, such as in the *toguan* or *partungkoan*<sup>45</sup>, the market (*onan*), etc. But for official forums he appeared at the sessions of the *bius* because he was one of its members and because of his knowledge of regulations and details of life at the *bius* level, even though this knowledge was not codified in written form.<sup>46</sup>

Although in practice sometimes there was a Raja Patik who held the office of *raja huta* and *raja bius* also, but fundamentally the office of *Raja Patik* was consultative rather than formal, having a certain structure and dealing with regional matters, such as was the case with the offices of village and regional chiefs just mentioned. If he did not hold an office dealing with local or regional affairs, then his suggestions or teachings were not required to be accepted by the *bius*. Even so, he was a guide for moral and social matters and was acknowledged to be a 'walking encyclopedia'. So much was the case that he was respected greatly by all layers of society and was the one to inquire about all details of adat law and order. Therefore, he was properly an educator of society because he communicated values, and moral and social knowledge.

Thus the *Raja Patik*, sometimes called the adat chief, was one of three main officials in the structure of Batak society, along with the *raja* (*raja bius* and *raja huta*) and *the parbaringin*. The *raja* or chief was concerned with political matters, the *Raja Patik* with matters moral and social, and the *parbaringin* with religious issues, although in practice all of these functions tended to

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who is a remnant from the past for this century. He takes off from the clash of traditional Batak values with modern ones including Christian, but yet attempts to conserve *Habatahon* and make it into a viable belief by infusing it with modern values.

<sup>45</sup> This place is generally used for holding the sessions of the *bius* government; Situmorang *op. cit.*, p. 160f. Cf. Sitompul, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. the conclusion of Parkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 438f that for traditional Batak society, knowledge and oral expressions contain more sacred power (*sahala*) than knowledge and written expressions.

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overlap. Each of the three officials were educators in own realm. But it was the Raja Patik who most directly carried on the function of education due to the character of his office and expertise. In this way he communicated most directly with the broader community.

What about the *datu*? What is his function in the structural life of Batak society? This topic will be addressed especially in section E.

### ***D. Several Kinds of Knowledge and Technical and Practical Skills***

In section C, we have just seen two tracks of education operating in the structure of traditional Batak society. We have also looked at religious, moral and social values which were all involved in the totality of the adat, and also at the officials who had a role in communicating the values and knowledge contained in the offices represented.

Along with all the above and closely related to it was the Bataks' need for various kinds of knowledge and skills for carrying out the demands of their daily lives. Although many observers hold that lives of the Batak 'patriarchs' were relatively remote since the time when they first arrived and took up residence in the lake Toba area, nevertheless the reality was different. Over a time frame of thousands of years, the patriarchs through their community have managed to maintain and develop a goodly amount of knowledge and skills in the people who followed their leadership. The fruits can be seen in various kinds of material products which have been evaluated by outside sources, including the Rhenish mission, as showing high quality and artistic taste. Material products, such as buildings, working tools, and varied equipment for the maintenance of the common ventures of life, have been fashioned obviously by people expert in their fields, and in turn these have handed on their expertise to the next generation through specific types of education, instruction or training.

We shall neither discuss all types of professions or fields of expertise nor knowledge and skills which Bataks possess. It will be sufficient to mention several examples which indicate that Bataks have a material cultural product of high quality in addition to social, moral and religious cultural

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forms which were outlined in a former section. It will be suggested as well how the related knowledge and skills are handed on through the process of education.

### *1. The Batak House*

In a way parallel to the complexity of tribes grouped into the sub-tribes of the Batak people, the architectural forms and models for the Batak house are varied as well. But whatever example is noted, all observers agree that the Batak house possesses a high quality style of architecture and construction,<sup>47</sup> although from the side of its healthfulness, admittedly perhaps it does not fulfil modern hygienic conditions. We shall not belabour a discussion of the construction details of a Batak house, the ceremonies conducted during its building, and the technical details of its architecture. What we want to stress here is only that building such a house demands knowledge and considerable technical skills related to geometry, knowledge of materials and construction, etc. These are possessed by the architect or master carpenter, *pande ruma* or *panumpang ruma*. The mastery of the needed knowledge and skills from a theoretical perspective is not as sophisticated as is evident in the modern knowledge of construction, but it should be remembered that the Bataks had a system of numbers and arithmetic at that time, call it traditional mathematics if you will, which was adapted to the needs of constructing houses, villages, and various equipment needed for daily life. They learned that knowledge, and in turn taught it, through a process of apprenticeship since there were no formal institutes of technology.

Usually the *pande ruma* was accompanied by other experts, such as the carver of the intricate designs (*panggorga*), and the painter. These not only mastered the aesthetic of ornamentation and painting but they had to be religious experts as well because the three colours used, red, white and

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<sup>47</sup> See for example J. Warneck: "Das Bataksche Haus", in *BRMG*, 1937, pp. 337ff, which evaluates the Batak house as a work of art and product of skilled hands, and also as an object which has special social and religious value. Cf. Loeb, *op. cit.*, pp. 21ff and J. Hasibuan: *Art et Culture, Seni budaya Batak* (1985), p. 271.

black, applied to each ornament had symbolic significance.<sup>48</sup>

## 2. Village (*huta*)

The original Batak village consisted of from ten to twenty houses only, which were surrounded by a rampart (*parik*) which functioned as a barricade especially against enemy attacks. In areas with many large stones, these were piled up to form the rampart, with secret spaces covered with layers of soil. Bamboo with thorns were planted on its crest. The technique of transporting those large stones is reminiscent of the transportation of stones for building the pyramids, i.e. a process of either pushing or dragging, and not through the use of the wheel since the latter was a still unknown technology for the Bataks. At a special place in the fence, a *harbangan* (gate) was built which could be shut and opened.

Each village had a large yard used for many functions: a place for celebrations (*horja*), a place to dry the rice bundles, playground, etc. The building of the yard needed special techniques and processes for levelling and treating the soil so that it would be smooth and not be given over to mud during rains; its material was a mixture of soil and sand which reminds us of the technology for making a gravel tennis court. The building of the complete village with its rampart and yard was undertaken by a number of skilled people. Regrettably, a large number of the original villages are now damaged, or worse extinct.

## 3. Boats (*solu*)

Originally, because the Bataks only lived around lake Toba and the island of Samosir in its midst, the proa (canoe) was the most important vehicle.<sup>49</sup> The proa were of various types and

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<sup>48</sup> The symbolic significance of the three colours *bonang manalu* (three kinds of thread) has been explained in Ph. O.L. Tobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God* (1963), p. 79.

<sup>49</sup> It is interesting that the *solu* never had a sail so its

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dimensions,<sup>50</sup> but all of them were made from logs. The type of tree which fulfilled the requirements for a proa were seldom found on the shore of lake Toba, so the logs had to be sought far away in the forest. The tasks of selecting and felling the tree, shaping it into a rough form of the proa, dragging it to the lake shore, were carried out by a skilled craftsman we may call the builder of a rough proa. The proa itself was dragged to the lake using the same techniques for dragging stones for the village protective fence. On its arrival at the lake, the final touches were worked by another expert craftsman we may call the finisher of the proa. He was aided by an apprentice and a team of carvers to carve its ornamentation.

#### 4. *Building Rice Terraces (parumaon)*

Among the Batak tribes, the Toba Bataks are the ones most adept in the practice of wet-rice culture. The work of fashioning terraced rice fields beyond the village, engaging in dry rice culture and cultivating other field crops are not simple tasks because the area is hilly. To form terraces up to the base of the mountain and to channel water to each terrace requires a sophisticated system of irrigation. Building of the water channels is carried out by an expert using the gravity feed system under the coordination of the *raja bondar* who is the architect, manager and initiator of the giant irrigation system.

Among the numerous water channel systems built by Bataks before an acquaintance with western irrigation technology, the one most attractive to observers was found in Meat, a steep chain of hills near Balige. According to Sitor Situmorang's research, the irrigation system there was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century before either the mission personnel or the colonial government had extended its reach to that area.<sup>51</sup> Cunningham sketched the geographical

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power of locomotion has its source only in human oar-power. Can this fact be mentioned as one proof of Batak backwardness in the field of technology of water transportation during the past, in addition to backwardness in the technology of land transportation which never knew the wheel?

<sup>50</sup> Among others, *Solu Bolon*, *Solu Lansaran*, *Solu Parsuribolon* and *Solu Parsada-sadaan*.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Sitor Situmorang, December 14, 1985.



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situation of the *Meat* region along with the terraced fields and irrigation system used, but stressed its limitations of potential and isolation more than the excellence of the system and the prosperity which it produced.<sup>52</sup> But, as a matter of fact, most of the farmers there moved to the Simalungun Batak area and other eastern regions in Sumatra later, where they built and developed a rice culture system guided by the technology brought from their original home area.

### 5. *Weaving*

For Bataks, traditional clothing and details of weaving are not merely technical and esthetic matters (manner of weaving and the variety of ways of preparing the yarn), but they are also related to religious matters. This is true because each design and motif of the fabric, especially for the *ulos*, have very profound symbolic significance. Therefore, each expert weaver (*partonun*) must understand the significance of the symbol she weaves into the cloth.

S.A. Niessen has made a thorough study of the significance of the motifs found in Batak clothing and has come to the following conclusion:

... The theme of time is depicted variously by the *ulos*, in the structure of its round warp, some of its decorative features, and in its social role... Fertility comes into focus as the motor of time as the *ulos*, whether as the bride, rice land, textiles or any gift at all bestowed by the wife-givers on the wife-takers at crucial moments in the life-cycle, transfer life-generating powers. Kinship structures are depicted temporally by the social role of the textiles, in the repetition of generations, the repetition of 3-generational *dalihan na tolu* cycles, and the faintly-evident continuity of the female descent line. The temporal aspects of *ulos* structure are also enmeshed with the themes of the rice cycle, astronomical and seasonal time, and the symbolism of the buffalo as it is led around the slaughter-pole tracing the passage of *Naga*

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<sup>52</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-17.

*Padoha*, the regulator of yearly time.<sup>53</sup>

## 6. *Equipment for daily living*

The Bataks knew how to make a variety of equipment needed in daily living such as household furniture and utensils, fanning tools, weapons, decoration, etc. These were made out of metal, wood, rattan, horns, etc. J.H. Meerwaldt and his students compiled a catalogue of objects found in a typical Batak home as these were collected by missionaries. The lists and classification made were as follows:<sup>54</sup>

1. Jewelry: bracelets, rings, necklaces, earrings of various shapes, forms and names as fashioned out of gold or silver.
2. Weapons: *panguras* (a kind of rifle), *sitenggar* (a type of pistol), *hampil* or *salepang* (box made from buffalo skin for bullets), *porpanggalahan* (flint for igniting the powder), plus various types of swords and knives.
3. Musical instruments: flute, *tulila* (type of small trumpet), *hasapi* (a two-stringed kecap, small 'cello'), *saga-saga* (a kind of harmonica), *tanggetang* (a small ukulele), *ogung* (gong) which includes *oloan*, *doal* and *panggora*, one set of percussion instruments (*gordang*, *tataganing* and *odap*), *hombung* (pieces of metal tuned differently stored in a chest), *sarune* (a reed instrument), etc.
4. Farming equipment: *gair-gair* or *hudali* (a three-pronged rake), *ansuan* (digging stick), *ninggala* (plow), *auga* (yoke), *sisir* or *rogo* (rake), *sasabi* (scythe), *guris* (hoe), etc.
5. Kitchen utensils: *dagu* (a rice spoon used especially for festivals), *sonduk* (spoon), *seak* (cup), *hudon* (cooking pot), *poting* (bamboo water container), *anduri* (winnowing basket), *hombur-hombur* (round, closed rattan basket), *sapa* (bamboo snack container), *panutuan* (stone for grinding spices), *parburian* or *ramboan* (wash basin), *parsisiraan* (salt container), *tabu-tabu* (gourd water container), etc.
6. Storage containers: made out of rattan, bamboo, etc.: *panuhuan*, *hadangan*, *hajut*, *sanihe*, *ragian*, *harpe*, *angkut-angkut*, *singkup*, etc.
7. Weaving equipment: *pipisan*, *sorha*, *anian*, *erdeng-erdeng* or *hulhulan*, *iran*,

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<sup>53</sup> Sandra Ann Niessen, *Motifs of Life in Toba Batak Texts and Textiles* (dissertation, 1985), p. 272.

<sup>54</sup> J.H. Meerwaldt, "Catalogus van de voorwerpen der Zending-Batak-Kist" [Catalog of a Batakmission Chest], (unpublished manuscript in the archives of the ZB Oegstgeest, K. 52/D. 19).

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*pangungasan, pamapan, pagabe, pamungung, hatulungan, baliga, balobas, turak, hasoli, parsosaan, songka, lili, paniratan, tipak, etc.*

8. Smoking and betel nut equipment: *tulpang* (pipe), *hajut, panutuan demban, parhapuran, salapa, gansip, etc.*

9. Accessories for festivals: *tunggal panaluan, pustaha, porhalaan, pamuhu, tanduk, sisungarsungar, etc.*

10. Various other kinds of utensils, equipment and tools.<sup>55</sup>

All the tools and equipment above were made by people skilled and knowledgeable based on such 'sciences' as metallurgy, geometry, etc. most of which were mastered orally until they became second nature. These persons along with other 'professionals' already mentioned learned and taught their knowledge and skills through traditional and informal education obtained within the family or wider society.

Especially in the building of the village, rice fields and proas, the specialists in those fields generally cooperated with the *raja patik*, with the *malim* (priest as a member of the *parbaringin*) and where necessary with the *datu*, the religious leader/healer. Because, in keeping with the totalistic character of Batak adat as described above, such working together involved both the social and legal side (the *raja patik*'s area of expertise) as well as the religious-magical side (the *malim*'s and *datu*'s area of expertise).

On the basis of the kinds of values, knowledge and skills (also professions), which were known and possessed by the Bataks as described above and also the transferring these through the process of traditional education, we see that traditional Batak education was comprehensive. This means that Batak education included in itself the three main categories identified by modern educational science, i.e., *values* (the *affective* domain comprising esthetic, social, moral and

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<sup>55</sup> In the work of Jamaluddin Hasibuan (*op. cit.*) there is found a photograph of several tools listed in Meerwaldt's catalog. (Only the paintings done by Meerwaldt's students in the Narumonda Seminary are found in that catalog.) In addition, in Hasibuan's work there are found the names and pictures of numerous objects or tools which are not found in Meerwaldt's catalog, such as objects related to pleasure and games (p. 286), for example Batak chess (*marusir*) which involves difficult mathematical principles, so it is a valuable means for training the intelligence of Bataks.

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religious aspects), *knowledge* (the *cognitive* domain), and *skills* (the *psychomotor* domain).

A question arises in this connection: from where did the Bataks receive their values, knowledge and skills? Are all of these the creative works and original property of the Bataks? If the answer were based on a literal understanding of the Batak myth such as the *Pustaka Agong* and *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* referred to earlier, then the answer would be positive. Yes, all of the above were bequeathed through the patriarchs to the Bataks by the gods utilizing irrational means. However, based on the generally received modern ethnological theories, we are able to say that all of the values, knowledge and skills, or at a minimum their kernels or basic principles, were brought by the founding fathers to the Batak area from their place of origin.<sup>56</sup> Or the fathers obtained them from contact with other people especially those with a Hindu background, after they began to dwell in the region later known as Batakland (*tano Batak*).

Although admittedly the influence on the Bataks from India and Hinduism is clear, yet that does not mean that the values, knowledge and skills which the Bataks have were taken over *en masse*, or were the result of other outside influences. The Batak community which for thousands of years resided in the area about Lake Toba used their local genius and developed the heritage brought by their forefathers from their place of origin by joining these with elements received from the 'outside', then they fashioned all three of those sources into a valid possession. In other words,

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<sup>56</sup> With reference to the origin of the honored Batak progenitors and the time of their arrival in Sumatra and journey to the shores of Lake Toba, there are various hypotheses with similarities and differences here and there. For example, M.O. Parlindungan (*Tuanku Rao*, pp. 19-28) concludes that the Batak tribe belong to the Proto-Malay who came in three waves from the mountainous area on the Burma-Thailand border and have resided in the Batak area for the past 3000 years plus or minus. On the other hand E. St. Harahap (*op. cit.*, p. 10) concludes that the Bataks originated from the Aryan race of India. At the same time, Parkin holds that the Bataks came from Greater India (*op. cit.*, p. 12). But all agree about the major influence of India/Hinduism on various sides of Batak life, religious, cultural, moral, social and economic, including various kinds of equipment and tools. Some of the influence was brought with them when they came to their part of Sumatra, and other dimensions of Indian influence became absorbed after they were living in the Batak land.

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through a process of their own unique development in their new place, the Bataks grew towards their own autonomy succeeding in building their own system of values, knowledge and skills, and at the same time formed their own special identity as a people or ethnic group.

The readiness of the Bataks to absorb outside influences as well as to profit from these in making them their own and in developing their own identity proves that the Bataks were not totally introverted or closed to influences and contributions from without, as supposed by many people<sup>57</sup>, especially so if there were influences or contributions which were deemed profitable for their community.

Talking about the "local genius" of the Batak along with their openness and flexibility towards outside influences and new ideas or practices, Parkin has written:

There is an intrinsic flexibility in *adat* which recognizes the validity of changing and different circumstances .... The Toba Batak has always welcomed the new ideas of a congenial nature; the Batak local genius has adopted them to Batak culture and at the same time the Batak has adapted himself to the new circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

In connection with influence from India he has also concluded:

Indianization was not a simple importation and acceptance of Hindu-Buddhism concepts, but rather a reworking and reforming of those concepts through the creative power of the local genius.<sup>59</sup>

In brief, based upon openness and flexibility to outside influences and based upon the ability to rework them all as well in order to become their own, Bataks have succeeded in defending their batakness and at the same time 'batakized' their surroundings. This open and flexible attitude together with their ability to rework outer influences so that the result became their possession,

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<sup>57</sup> This was the judgment of H. Kraemer, *From Mission Field to Independent Church* (1958), p. 44. While W.B. Sidjabat, *Ahu Si Singamangaraja*, pp. 31-43, presents various proofs which negate that general impression.

<sup>58</sup> Parkin, *op. cit.*.. pp. 17f.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

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played an important role later in the encounter of Bataks with the Rhenish mission and Dutch colonial power, both of which brought new values, knowledge and skills. The process of receiving and redoing new elements from outside were comprehended in the process of traditional Batak education characterized by its social informality and its learning by doing, because those experts whom we have mentioned were included in the circle of developers of the local genius.

#### ***E. Datu and Hadatuon Professional and Specialized Knowledge***

In addition to the professions and knowledge previously analyzed, all of whom had a clear place and important role in the framework of the Batak traditional education system, there is yet one more professional class with its specialized knowledge, i.e. the *datu* and his *hadatuon*. Admittedly, this profession with its specialized knowledge did not have a direct place in the order of traditional Batak education which was characterized by its openness and socializing role. This is the case since the *datu* did not function as a teacher of the broader community as was the case with the *Raja Patik*. In addition, his process of communicating his knowledge was esoteric and therefore hidden to the uninitiated. Even so as we shall see later, the *datu's* role was indeed impressive in contributing towards the building up of the knowledge of traditional Batak education, as well as in the expression of modern education in Batakland which came with the Christian mission and the colonial government.

Many observers hold that the *datu* functions as a priest in Batak religion rituals.<sup>60</sup> This opinion is not totally correct, because as we have seen the person carrying out priestly functions at adat ceremonies (within it there are religious elements as part of the totalistic essence of the adat) at the

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<sup>60</sup> J. Warneck in *Toba Batak-Deutsches Wörterbuch* [A Batak-German Dictionary] (edited anew by R. Roolvink, 1977), p. 56, translates or defines *datu* with *Zauber-priester, Zauberer, Wahrsager, Arzt* (Spell-priest, Magician, Soothsayer, Doctor), but on p. 28 he also calls the *parbaringin* as a *Priester*. Cf. Pedersen, *Batak Blood*, p. 31, "The *datu* functioned as a priest".

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*bius* level was the *parbaringin*, whereas for adat ceremonies at the village or *huta* level, the *suhut* (i.e. the *marga* undertook these itself through a person or persons appointed specially for this service).<sup>61</sup> The *datu* functioned only in those religious rites which contained elements of magic requiring the expressing of *tabas* (*mantera*; magic formula) in making contact with or communicating with supernatural forces. In other words, the *datu* was the ritual specialist with reference to magical matters, and was not a priest or 'pastor' in the general sense, since he accompanied the *parbaringin* only as needed. In the magical ceremonies, *mantera* - not *tonggo* (prayers) - were spoken. Along with the *mantera*, there were sacrificial offerings made to the supernatural powers. Therefore, if the *datu* are called priests, then it is only in the special meaning which we have given.

Situmorang distinguishes between the *parbaringin* and the *pendeta raja*<sup>62</sup> and the *datu*:

Based on an understanding of *hamalimon* (priesthood), the *parbaringin* and the *pendeta raja* maintained a distance from the practice of magic as it was carried out among the people and implemented by the magician (*datu*). The *parbaringin* and *pendeta raja* did not worship spirits of any kind, but offered prayers to Mulajadi, or to *sombaon* (spirit of the founding father who had the highest position along with gods, author) as an aspect of Mulajadi ....

Moreover, the *parbaringin* and *pendeta raja* were not involved in shamanistic practices such as exorcising evil spirits which had taken up residence in the body of an individual. Neither did they 'practice' medicine or tell fortunes as did the *datu*.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Situmorang, *op. cit.*, p. 110ff, calls the leader of *huta*-level ceremonies, "lay pastor", but the *parbaringin* is named a "professional pastor".

<sup>62</sup> *Pendeta Raja* (priest-king) is an institution or office which began to be known in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the one most widely known was the institution and dynasty of Si Singamangaraja. This institution was higher than the *bius*, and did not interfere with the *bius* government. Since the *bius* was its or his locale of operation, it was the ceremonial capital for rituals undertaken by the *bius* group. The *pendeta raja* was not only respected, but he also functioned as the leader of *bius* ceremonies, and was assisted by the *parbaringin* organization. The *pendeta raja* had a higher spiritual status than the *parbaringin*, but was never called *parbaringin*. The *pendeta raja* accepted more rigid rules for daily living than those followed by *parbaringin*; Situmorang, *op. cit.*, pp. 117ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161f.

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In the framework of carrying on their work, the *datu* used the 'sciences' and paraphernalia and a variety of concoctions and manner of treatment and magical acts, as well as astrology, climatology and calendrical calculations. The 'sciences' were written in the *Pustaka*, a collection of writings written on tree bark sheets folded many times and kept in a chest ornamented with special symbols, or written on pieces of bamboo sheets tied together.

According to Winkler<sup>64</sup>, there were three categories of *Pustaka* based on the purpose of their usage:

1. 'Science/knowledge' for the care of life (*die Kunst, das Leben zu erhalten*; Protective Magic), which includes diagnosis, therapy, medicinal mixes which have magical properties, amulet, *parmanisan* (love charms), etc.
2. 'Science/knowledge' for destroying life (*die Kunst, das Leben zu vernichten*; Destructive Magic), which encompasses the 'art' of making poison, the art of controlling or utilizing the power of certain spirits, calling the *pangulubalang*<sup>65</sup>, and the art of making *dorma* (magical formulas for causing a person to fall in love).
3. 'Science/knowledge' of predicting (*die Kunst der Sagerei*; Divination) which involves oracles (word of gods) which explains the wishes of the spirit called, commands from gods and spirits of the ancestors, and an almanac or calendrical system (*porhalaan*), and astrology to determine auspicious days and months to accomplish certain actions or goals.

All of these were developed through magical rites in an effort to communicate with supranatural forces, i.e. spirits of the ancestors, spirits in nature (*paringan*) and evil spirits.

Bartlett<sup>66</sup> who did special research on datuism among the Pardembanan Batak (most of whom originated from the Toba Bataks) who now reside in the Asahan and Labuhan Batu region, found out that in *datu* circles there were variations of terminology, of understanding of the terms, medical concoctions, paraphernalia, and other differences of technique. (The variations are understandable in view of the fact that these Bataks came from different Batak tribes.) Even so, the main content of the *Pustaka* used by each *datu* includes Winkler's three categories.

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<sup>64</sup> J. Winkler, *Die Toba-Batak auf Sumatra in gesunden und kranken Tagen* [The Toba Bataks of Sumatra In Sickness and In Health] (1925), pp. 79-224; summarized in Parkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 165ff.

<sup>65</sup> Ph.O.L. Tobing (*op. cit.*, p. 182) explains that *Pangulubalang* is the spirit of a male child who was kidnapped from an enemy area and killed; the body of the victim was made into *pupuk*, a magical powder, which was buried in a certain place or put into some container.

<sup>66</sup> H.H. Bartlett, *The Labours of Datoe*, Part I (1930) and Part II (1931). Other writings of his were collected under the same title (Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 5, 1973).



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How is the 'science of datuism' learned and mastered by the datu, and how do they in turn teach all this to other people? As we touched upon above, the teaching-learning process involved in the science of datuism was esoteric and specialized, as special as the 'science' itself. The person teaching must be the datu himself; that is why frequently the datu has the title of teacher as well (remember Guru Tatea Bulan, inheritor of the Pustaha Agong, who according to the Batak myth was the first datu as teacher). The process of handing on this science to the next person to become the datu involves a series of unique ceremonies, and in the teaching-learning process there is but one teacher and one student.

Supposing that a person not a *datu* would want to have his child become one, he would invite a datu who had the reputation of being very able.<sup>67</sup> Generally, the mentioned desire would have been stimulated by a special dream so that in the teaching-learning process there would be a coming together between 'science' and inspiration. The child would ask the datu in a special ceremony for permission to become his student. At the ceremony, the candidate would *manulangi* (literally: put food in the mouth) both the datu and the parents with *dengke natinutung* (roasted fish or meat), as a sign of his readiness to be his student. In addition, at the ceremony, the datu would receive a 'tuition' down payment in the form of sword, spear, an ulos and several coins. Officially, the instruction has begun. Usually the datu will move in with the parents of the student, sometimes with his whole family, and the parents will be expected to pay for all the board and room expenses.

The first step is to learn to read and write. For this purpose the datu takes the student to a clump of bamboo in order for him to look for *bulu suraton* (special bamboo used for writing material purposes). Before cutting the bamboo, they must make an offering to the spirit of the datu's deceased teacher (because generally he will have already died), the spirit of the ancestors, and the spirits of other deceased, and to the five gods<sup>68</sup>, along with the 'resident' nature spirits: *Boraspati ni tano* and *Boru Saniang Naga*<sup>69</sup>. After the bamboo has been taken from the clump, the reading and writing lesson

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<sup>67</sup> There is a difference in class and expertise among the various *datu*: *datu bolon*, *datu metmet* or *datu kissil*, moreover there are false *datu* (cf. Bartlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 and 135). In addition, there are differences of specialization, such as for battles, medical treatment, etc., even though each has mastered the same 'datu science'.

<sup>68</sup> Winkler does not name these five *dewata*, but perhaps what he intended was the three-fold manifestation of *Debata Mulajadi na Bolon*, i.e. *Batara Guru*, *Soripada* (= *Balasori*) and *Mangala Bulan* (= *Balabulan*), to be added also *Debata Idup* and *Sibasana na Bolon* (= *Silaon na Bolon*). For information about the function of each, among other authors, see A.B. Sinaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-78.

<sup>69</sup> These two residents in nature are placed also in the category of gods by Sinaga (*ibid.*, p. 71).

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begins. The first step is learning the nineteen consonants of the Batak alphabet in sequence, to be followed by learning to read the vowel signs. This preliminary process called *morhamisaraan* may take quite a while until the student is able to read and write (called *manongon ribut*). The datu then dictates his science and the student writes the content down on bamboo strips, or animal skins, until he has built up his own *pustaka* with its special signs for reading, or codes which only he can understand.

The process of this knowledge transfer does not take place rapidly because it is difficult for the student to absorb or digest this high 'science' and to write it down exactly. This is the case because the student's own *tondi* (spirit) is not yet strong or cleansed. In order for the *tondi* to become strong (*asa jora tondina*) enough to receive the lessons, the datu takes the student to a river, gives him a handful of uncooked rice and submerges the student seven times until all the rice has been swallowed. This ceremony is called *marsipatorus*. Afterwards, the datu makes an offering to the gods and ancestors, requesting strength for the student to continue his study. Then he is returned to his home to continue his instruction.

If afterwards it is obvious that the student still finds it difficult to learn the lessons, the datu undertakes another approach to heal the 'ignorance' of the student; he is taken to the top of the mountain believed to be the place where the spirits of the ancestors worship. There the datu explains the nature of the student's *hangan* (hindrance) in front of a container filled beforehand with various magical charms and spells. Afterwards, the container is suspended on a branch of a bamboo so the wind will carry away the student's lack of aptitude. Then both return to the village where the datu informs the parents that various presents need to be given to him if the student wants to continue the lessons and achieve positive results. If after all this it is obvious that the student is yet unable to master the datu's 'science', then he gives up and ends the effort to teach.

For the talented student, the learning process progresses without hindrance, generally after the *marsipatorus* ceremony. The datu teaches all of his 'science' to the candidate. As long as the instruction goes on, the datu continues to make new demands and conditions for continuation, which not infrequently includes expensive items such as a cow, buffalo, and gold jewelry. When the instruction is considered completed and the student has passed, a graduation ceremony is held. On this occasion, the student again feeds the datu, and the latter *mamasu-masu* (blesses) the student. With this blessing of the datu-teacher, the student has become officially a datu and may 'open his practice' while further developing his own 'science'.

Noting the extensiveness of material conditions for becoming a student of datuism, generally this opportunity is open only to children of the village chief because only he tends to be wealthy. Moreover, it is often the case that it is the village chief who desires that one of his children will become a datu. But there are cases where the material conditions demanded are not overly heavy, for example if the teacher himself is a father, or if there is a good relationship between the *datu* and the student or his parents.

We shall not discuss the 'ins and outs' of the *datu's* practice involving the three categories of 'science' mentioned above, because this is outside the scope of our analysis. What we want to see, however, through the teaching-learning process of becoming a datu, is that Bataks, even if only a few, are familiar with a certain learning process. And that they found in the person of the datu a combination of the offices of teacher and preacher (or perhaps, to be more precise: teacher-priest), which is also to be found later in the missionary teachers.

Of course, the educational process, or the teaching-learning process of the hadatuon is not really

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included in the traditional Batak educational system which is social and open. Too, the *datu's Pustaka* has no significance for daily life, both because the language is strange and difficult to be understood by society, and its content is not wanted by many people, in fact not infrequently it gives rise to fear.<sup>70</sup> The *datu* figure himself is not popular in society, because the latter evaluates the *datu* as not a desirable person because of his magical 'science' (especially the type classified as "destructive magic" or "black magic").

Even so, we need to discuss some of the details of datuism because of its contribution towards the conservation of the treasury of Batak knowledge. Until now whenever we used the word *hadatuon* 'science', we have always used quotation mark signs. It may be asked legitimately whether such 'science' as possessed and taught by the *datu* later may be called *science* according to conventional (read Western) understanding, i.e. characterized as being rational, empirical and open for investigation. Generally, observers are of the opinion that if measured by the criteria of modern, read Western, science, then the *datu's* 'science' along with magical knowledge in the whole world, can not be categorized as a science.<sup>71</sup>

But with reference to the matter of content or concerning certain elements within the datuistic system, there is much to be considered positive, even scientific, according to this writer. Those elements have had a role in traditional Batak education which dealt with socialization as well with the educational efforts later by

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<sup>70</sup> Sinaga, *op. cit.*, p. 19; cf. M. Singarimbun, *Kinship, Descent and Alliance among the Karo-Batak* (1975), p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> The Rhenish missionaries in general held to that opinion and evaluation, and they considered the *datu* as the main pillar of "heathenism". (Cf. Chapter Four concerning the teaching of *Medizin* [medicine] in the *Sikola Mardalan-dalan* and the Seminary and the medical ministry of the missionaries and the native teacher, in the framework of throwing light on the medical treatment of the *datu*). Later there were several Rhenish missionaries who saw positive elements in "datuism". Winkler was one. His writings have been quoted many times in this dissertation; but that only touched on certain elements of it and was not related to its essence or characteristic. Cf. N. Siahaan, *Sedjarah Kebudajaan Batak* [History of Batak Culture] (1964) p. 121. In fact later, there were Batak Christians including pastors who became *datus*. But as far as this author knows, they accomplished their role as *datu* by utilizing just certain elements from datuism, such as medical ingredients, calculation of seasons, etc., but the roots were no longer in the ancient faith. Concerning pastors who doubled as *datu*, see for example, S.R. Siregar, *Adat, Islam and Christianity in a Batak Homeland* (1981), pp. 51ff, who discusses the case of Pastor Kondar (Siregar).

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the Christian mission and colonial government. This matter will be taken up in succeeding chapters. Here we shall discuss a few of those positive elements.

### *1. Language and Script*

As we have touched on in our explanation of the *Si Raja Batak* myth, only the *Pustaka Agong* containing datuism was given and preserved in written form. Indeed in reality until the coming of western researchers, only the datu and their students had mastered the Batak alphabet so that as Winkler has said, "the entire Batak literature is the work of the *datu* and their students".<sup>72</sup>

When H.N. van der Tuuk was in Batakland from 1851-1857 to investigate Batak language and script, particularly in the Barus area and environs, he asked those whom he met to write down examples of Batak script, grammar, folk stories including myths, prayers, etc. It was obvious that only the datu and their students were able to fulfil his request. In other words, thanks to *the datu*, Van der Tuuk along with succeeding researchers in the Batak language were able to succeed in obtaining documents in the Batak language using ancient Batak script. Later, this was utilized by missionaries in support of their work, including the ministry of education.<sup>73</sup>

Basically, Batak script consists of 19 characters (*inang ni surat*). But these can be increased to become 126 in total. In the *pustaka*, datu wrote codes and varied types of punctuation, and the way of writing each differed from the other, in order to guard the secrecy of their 'science'. Hence, these writings are difficult for others to read. Furthermore, the datu used or made up various terms and a style of writing which were generally not found in the language of daily life. But in his works, Van der Tuuk succeeded in composing a standard grammar and script based on his studying the documents which he received from the datu.<sup>74</sup> Afterwards, Van der Tuuk's writings became a guide for missionaries preparing literature for school and

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<sup>72</sup> Winkler, *Die Toba-Batak*, p. 76. Cf. J. Warneck, "Die Entstehung einer christlichen Literatur bei dem Batakvolk" [Origins of a Christian Literature among the Batak People] in *BRMG* 1905, p. 542, and J. Neumann, "Der Bataksche Goeroe" [The Batak Teacher], in *MNZG* 1910, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> There were also missionaries such as G. van Asselt who studied the language of the *datu*; see G. van Asselt, *Aus den Anfängen der Batak-Mission* [Beginnings of the Batak Mission], vol. I (1911), p. 21. For the usefulness of Van der Tuuk's writings for the Mission, see Chapter Four B. 2(b) below.

<sup>74</sup> Among the works of Van der Tuuk are: *Dutch-Batak Dictionary*, *Batak Grammar*, a translation of a few parts of the Bible into the Batak language, and various pieces of Batak literature.

congregation, even as they tried to improve upon his achievement.

Several elements from the content of the pustaha, such as the calendrical system, instrument for indicating points of the compass, are found in school books, written by missionaries. Similarly, various elements of Batak literature which were transmitted through the oral approach originally, such as folk stories, proverbs, puzzles (*huling-hulingan*) were written into school text books later, thanks to the help of the *datu*.

In other words, documents in the language and script preserved by the *datu*, or written down by their help, have become material for research and a significant contribution to science and education. The ability of the *datu* to preserve and communicate oral literature through their verbal teachings, ought to be valued highly in the opinion of some missionaries.<sup>75</sup>

## 2. Systems Concerning an Almanac, Calendar and Astrology

To utilize the third category of the 'science' of the *datu*, according to Winkler's classification mentioned above, the *datu* used various tools giving content to the Batak calendrical system based on calculations of the movement and positions of objects in space.

We shall not investigate how the *datu* utilized those tools, and we shall not discuss how accurate their calculations were. We want to see elements within them which were known and used more or less by the Bataks in their daily lives and taught to the wider community as well as the family:

*division of night and day:* There were several points for indicating time:

About 5 A.M.: *buha-buha ijuk*; 6 A.M.: *binsar*; 7 A.M.: *tarbakta*; 8 A.M.: *tarbakta raja*; 11 A.M.: *humarahos*; noon: *hos ni ari*; 1 P.M.: *guling mata ni ari*; and so on.

*division of month into thirty days*, each with its own name:

*artia, suma, anggara, muda, boraspati, singkora, samisara, antian ni aek, suma ni mangadop, anggara sampulu, muda ni mangadop, boraspati ni tangkop, singkora purnama, samisara purnama, tula, suma ni holom, anggara ni holom, muda ni holom, boraspati ni holom, singkora mora turun, samisara mora turun, antian ni angga, suma ni mate, anggara na begu, muda di mate, boraspati ni gok, singkora duduk, samisara bulan mate, hurung, ringkar.*

*division of year into twelve months:*

First through tenth month: *Sipaha Sada* through *Sipaha Sampulu*; eleventh month: *Li*; twelfth: *Hurung*; with the addition of the thirteenth month (*bulan lobi-lobi*) once every five or six years.

*the twelve parts of the zodiac (Pormesa)*, based on position and movement of the heavenly bodies.

As mentioned above, the names of days and months of the *Porhalaan* (calendar) were also used in the

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<sup>75</sup> Neumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-18.

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school books written by the missionaries.

### 3. *Compass Point Indicator: desa na ualu and bindu matoga*

*Desa na ualu* points to the eight directions of the wind: *purba, anggoni, dangsina, nariti, pastima, manabia, utara* and *irisanna*. *Bindu Matoga* points to the stars which live in or have authority over each compass direction. These two directional instruments were equipped with various symbolic objects using three specific colours: red, white and black (see above note no. 48). The names of the eight directions of the compass were also written into the school textbooks by the missionaries, and used also in translating the Bible and other literature.

### 4. *Materials for Traditional Divination*

Divination utilized various plants, animals and other material from nature which the *datu* processed and utilized in his own distinctive ways. In line with the characteristics and goal of hadatuon 'science', the divination was used by the *datu* for bringing to life, healing, or also destroying.

We need not debate the occurrence of traditional divination in healing people from sickness or in the maintenance of health, since this is an effort found throughout the world, and not only among the Bataks. It is clear that elements of divination were known and used by the general community in its daily living and afterwards handed on to the following generation, even though the actual usage may have differed from that of the *datu*. Although, basically the *datu's* 'science' was his own secret, yet there were those who explained traditional divination and the details of treatment to the public so that each person could utilize them for his or her own need.

After making this rapid overview of some of the details of datuism, we can conclude that the *datu* was a person with varied functions: he was a priest (with a special meaning) physician, astrologist, teacher (again with a special meaning of the term) and author, or at the very least a preserver of traditional writings. He was a person both feared and hated, and at the same time one needed and sought after.

Although, he did not have a significant role in the traditional Batak system of education, nevertheless

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his 'science' made a major contribution not only to the life of the ancient Batak society, i.e., before it encountered the Western world, but also to the scientific and missionary communities as well. It could be said also that until the missionary period, the *datu* was the possessor of *sahala parbinotoan* (authoritative power based on knowledge). Just the desire to obtain the *datu's sahala parbinotoan* was one of the motivations for becoming a teacher during the period of missionary dominance and also to set aside the supremacy of the *datu* in dally life.<sup>76</sup>

### ***F. Conclusion***

From the general observations above, we have seen that before becoming acquainted with the system of modern western education, the Bataks had a traditional system of education. This system involved: (1) a *curricular scope*, i.e. values (religious, moral, social, economic, political and cultural), knowledge and multi-faceted skills; (2) *places for education to occur*, i.e. activities of daily life, and various ceremonies for the fulfilment of comprehensive adat demands both as this impacted on the family and in the wider society beginning with the village (*huta*) to the regional association of villages (*bius*); (3) *educational processes*, i.e. the handing on of values, knowledge and skills from those having *sahala* to family members and community so that in essence education involved the informal but continuous on-going flow of *sahala* throughout life; (4) *educators*, i.e. parents and professionals considered to be possessors of *sahala*; (5) *educational objectives*, i.e the attainment of the main Batak ideals and life philosophy: wealth, many children and honor which were rooted and channelled through a fundamental desire or yearning: to possess, defend, strengthen and increase power (*sahala*).

The developing of this traditional system of education was supported by a culture which had reached a high level of attainment. Although many of its elements were brought by the Batak progenitors from their place of origin, or taken over from Sumatran areas outside of the Batak sphere, nevertheless the key to its

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<sup>76</sup> Andar Lumbantobing, *Das Amt in der Batakkirche* [Offices in the Batak Church] (Bonn inaugural dissertation), pp. 117ff; E. Nyhus, "The Encounter of Christianity and Animism among the Toba-Bataks of North Sumatra", in the *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, no. 2-3, October 1968, pp. 33-52. Cf. below Chapter Four.

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development must be found in the Batak "local genius" itself, i.e. the creativity and ability to utilize all three sources and develop them to become their legitimate possession.

As is found to be the case generally with ancient peoples, Batak culture too was part and parcel of its religion. In other words, as *homo religiosus*, Bataks did not separate their religious activities from such secular ones as working, learning, socializing, etc. Later this basic characteristic became a support for the reception of the values, knowledge and skills brought by the Rhenish missionaries, because the RMG too melded all of these into a Christian religious order and spirit.

The pattern of the Batak political-social order supported its traditional education, and was democratic, or at least characterized by its collectiveness, especially among the Toba Bataks. Each person had the same right and opportunity for his or her self-development. Even though Batak society had chieftains and prominent community leaders, these did not become a feudal class enjoying excessive privileges. The values, knowledge and skills of the Batak community were possessed together and each person had the right to learn them. Although an individual or a marga might have more knowledge, or skills in certain fields than another person or marga, nevertheless this was the result of serious study, effort and self-development within an open and competitive context.

If so, why then were the Bataks willing to receive new values, knowledge and skills which were brought either by the missionaries or others from outside its own community? There were several interlocking reasons which we shall look at in the chapters to come. Yet there is one reason which we have discovered already in our analysis in this chapter: the Batak openness to receive new elements which were perceived as profitable in their pursuit of ideals and goals for their own lives. Whether those ideals and life objectives which motivated the Bataks to learn were compatible with the objectives of the RMG effort in education is another problem. Just that issue is one of the important questions undertaken in this study in order to understand the details and significance of the encounter of the Bataks with the Rhenish mission in the educational field.