



doi <https://doi.org/10.58256/feze7416>



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Research Article

Section: Literature, Linguistics & Criticism



Published in Nairobi, Kenya  
by Royallite Global.

Volume 5, Issue 3, 2024

#### Article Information



Submitted: 4th February 2024

Accepted: 24th April 2024

Published: 31st May 2024

Additional information is available at the end of the article

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ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,  
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#### How to Cite:

Siagian, R. J. (2024). Examining the adaptation of Batak customs in response to social change: An assessment of the presence of Sahala and character traits. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.58256/feze7416>

## Examining the adaptation of Batak customs in response to social change: An assessment of the presence of Sahala and character traits

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#### Abstract

All customs and cultures are comprised of values that result from thought, reason, and the creations of a society. This shows that customs and cultures are dynamic and constantly changing. The higher the culture of a society, the higher the level of civilization within that society. This applies to all types of cultures around the world. In Batak land, Batak customs emphasize that all human life is united with the cosmos, where *Mulajadi na Bolon*, God resides. Customs involve patterns of behaviour that are carried out in obedience to the worshiped God from birth to death. However, Batak customs have experienced changes due to social dynamics that have occurred among the Batak people. In this case, the role of *sahala* is highly significant. The most important aspect of Batak customs is that they are related to rules and laws that must be followed to maintain harmony. Batak customs and culture are found among the Batak people in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This article employs a qualitative research methodology that prioritizes valid data for the various questions posed. The perspective of the Theology of Religions, specifically Olaf H. Schumann's theory, underpins the approach of this paper. The theory utilized refers to Clifford Geertz, who viewed religion as a symbolic system. The sociological theories of Weber and Berger are employed to examine the reality of society. Siagian's summary of the concept of *sahala*, which refers to a superior character, is also discussed. The discussion and analysis involve presenting new and earlier references, taking their validity seriously and considering them to strengthen the topic at hand.

**Keywords:** tradition, character, Batak, *Sahala*, religion



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### Public Interest Statement

In the opening section, *Sahala's* existence and character are reviewed, with an emphasis on understanding the customs, culture, and general practices of the Batak people. This provides a broader perspective on the topic being discussed. The introduction also explains the Batak concept of custom, which refers to rules and laws that form the basis of their way of life. Customs are linked to the Batak belief in *Debata Mulajadi na Bolon*, which is seen as one unity and totality with the cosmos. The cosmos consists of three continents, and all Batak rituals, activities, and worship are directed towards it. Customs are tied to humans as creators and implementers of custom, and changes in human society can have a direct impact on customs. Social change is closely linked to the three periods previously mentioned. This is because: Firstly, the traditional Batak people lived in harmony with nature and adhered to their customs. Secondly, the colonial government and missionaries brought about numerous changes and challenges in the lives of the church and society. Lastly, advancements in technology have led to shifts in perspective. Bataks believe that humans are composed of flesh (body), *tondi* (spirit), and *sahala* (soul). *Sahala* is a concept that has been around for a long time and refers to human existence, which is determined by obedience to *Debata's* will. Spirituality, which is necessary for maintaining *sahala*, refers to the power of *tondi*. Unfortunately, the increasing materialism of modern times is dwarfing the importance of *sahala*.

### Introduction

Custom is a commonly recognized way of behaviour in a specific region or time period, typically passed down through generations by elders via a shared consensus. This consensus serves as the foundation for implementing the custom as a legally binding rule for every member of society. Customs often reflect traditional societal norms, where leaders with traditional authority hold legal validity and their enforcement is upheld. Custom shares a close relationship with culture, which refers to the power used in creativity, initiative, and taste, as well as the processes, methods, and behaviours related to these aspects (Purba et al., 2022). Culture is the result of the use of this power, and humans, as subjects and actors of culture, are inextricably linked to the culture they produce (Purba et al., 2023b). Consequently, discussions about culture are essentially discussions about humans or their society.

In this situation, human behaviour is the main subject and focus of custom implementation, with the use of cultural symbols playing a crucial role (Rony et al., 2024). The goal is to exhibit specific behaviour from adherents, including religious behaviour. Therefore, the human element is of paramount importance in discussions concerning customs. Humans rely on their intellect to create the necessities of daily life, and their creative thinking propels civilization forward as a result of cultural work. Cultural change can occur at any time, influenced by factors that shape the culture itself, which in turn affects the social system in society. The uniqueness of every custom, tradition, culture, and society stems from the fact that the humans who produce it are unique themselves (Herman et al., 2019). Durkheim used the term *sui generis* to describe the uniqueness of each society as a producer of customs and culture (Durkheim, 1957). Muller first used the term to designate the uniqueness of a religious phenomenon in a society (Pals, 1987), and it is also used in various fields such as law, social sciences, artificial intelligence, psychology, and others to emphasize the unique and distinctive nature of that society (Maidanyk, 2021). This article confirms the validity of the various explanations that exist regarding the characteristics of customs, traditions, and culture of a society.

Despite the similarities between customs and culture, they are often distinguished by their differences. Customs are typically associated with habits, behavioural patterns, rituals, religion, and other similar elements, while culture encompasses a broader range of values that influence the way

people think and behave. This includes systems of knowledge, morals, law, institutions, art, language, and architecture, among other things, which collectively shape the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals within a community (Sutrisno et al., 2023). According to Weber (1978), the implementation of cultural values is closely linked to obedience from its adherents, suggesting that cultural values can have a significant impact on the behaviour of individuals within a community. Berger (1994) further emphasizes that cultural changes that designate humans as agents of change are largely dependent on the development of human thinking and its ability to influence the environment or world.

In summary, customs and culture are related but distinct concepts. Customs are typically associated with specific behaviours and rituals, while culture encompasses a broader range of values and beliefs that shape the way people think and behave. Cultural values can have a significant impact on the behaviour of individuals within a community and are closely linked to the development of human thinking.

In this framework, it is essential to consider Plato's idea that humans are dualistic beings, comprised of both soul (spirit) and body (flesh). The human soul has the potential to carry out good deeds, as stated by Cooper (1984). It is considered to be subtle, supernatural, and resides within the human mind. On the other hand, the body is perceived as the physical, material, and gross aspect of humanity (Berterns, 1986). According to Berger's perspective, humans create their world through the power of their soul, which is greatly influenced by the internalized values that subsequently manifest as a system of ideas, values, and morals (Berger, 1994). It is not surprising that Bellah connected human reality with the reality of religion, as Bellah believed that changes in social reality occur concurrently with changes in religion. Bellah categorized the evolution of religion into different time periods, including traditional, archaic, historical, premodern, and modern (Bellah, 2011).

Such categorization is also evident in the case of customs, which refer to various social realities across the world, such as the Batak people. In Geertz's view, culture and religion are intertwined and influence each other. Some argue that culture serves as a gateway to religion, but in the context of local Indonesian religion, it is more accurate to view culture as religion itself (Geertz, 1999).

### Research Method

Qualitative research methods prioritize valid data on the various questions asked, with a focus on theology of religions and the theory proposed by Schumann. This approach is based on Geertz's understanding of religion as a symbol system. Olaf Herbert Schumann's proposed approach to the science of religions provides valuable insights into understanding religious plurality and the relationships between religions. In this approach, the following points are relevant:

1. **Context and Perspective:** This approach takes into account the pluralistic society in which it operates, with a focus on observing and analyzing religious texts to gain an in-depth understanding of religious phenomena.
2. **Normative Method:** Theology of Religions assesses religious phenomena based on their internal plausibility, which is different from the descriptive and objective approach of the "Science of Religions."
3. **Religion as a Symbol System:** This approach aligns with Clifford Geertz's thinking, which views religion as a symbol system involving existing concrete religions.

The insights provided by Schumann's approach to the science of religions are valuable in comprehending religious plurality and the connections between religions. This approach takes into account the context and perspective of a pluralistic society, with an emphasis on analyzing religious texts to gain a deeper understanding of religious phenomena. The Normative Method of Theology of Religions evaluates religious phenomena based on their internal plausibility, whereas the descriptive and

objective Science of Religions assesses them from a different perspective. According to this approach, religion can be viewed as a symbol system, a concept inspired by Clifford Geertz's thinking, which recognizes that religion encompasses multiple concrete religions.

## Results and Discussion

Batak people recognize that this custom originates from *Mulajadi na Bolon*, the deity of the Batak people. Batak customs encompass *patik dohot uhum*, or rules and laws. Batak tradition encompasses the entirety of human life. As a result, human life must be lived within the confines of these rules and laws, which are inherent in the custom itself. In other words, custom equals rules and law, and life for the Batak people (Tampubolon, 2012) is defined by these principles.

Source Language (SL): Batak language

*Adat do ugari, sinihathon ni Mulajadi, Siradotan manipat ari Siulahonon di siulu balang ari*

Translated into Target Language: English

Customs are guidelines established by God, the Creator, that should be adhered to consistently and incorporated into one's daily life.

Conventional regulations, also known as *Mulajadi na Bolon* provisions, are guidelines that are handed down to humans to be followed according to the customary rules themselves. These traditional rules are based on the mythology of *Mulajadi na Bolon*.

Source Language (SL): Batak language

*"Ba molo munsungna dipatuduhon tu ho, pasahat ma tu ibana babi simenengeneng, asa marbunga emem, asa marboras gadongmu, alai molo tung dengdengna dipatuduhon tu ho, pasahat ma tu ibana manuk lahibini, unang adong sapata tu ho. Alai anggo pinggolna do dipatuduhon, pasahat ma tu ibana hambing puti, unang adong na huliton, alai molo djambutna dipatuduhon tu ho, pasahat ma tu ibana hoda na bara, unang adong haleon potir, ia dipatuduhon ihurna, pasahat ma tu ibana horbo pangalotlot, unang adong tahi ni Halak dohot tahi ni begu abar. Alai molo imbuluna dipatuduhon tu ho, pasahat ma tu ibana lembu sitiatio, unang adong na golap. Ia dagingna dipatuduhon tu ho, pasahat ma tu ibana horbo bus, asa horas hamu saluhut, I ma na gabe hasomalan tu djoloan on pasahaton ni djolma manisia." (Tobing, 1963).*

Translated into English (Target Language)

If his snout is revealed to you, perform a ritual sacrifice of a fertile pig to ensure that your rice and yams bear fruit. However, if his belly is shown, offer the couple's chicken as a gesture of respect to avoid being cursed. If his ears are exposed, present the white goat as a sacrifice. If his feathers are displayed, offer a red horse to prevent famine. If his tail is shown, provide a chasing buffalo to ward off bad intentions and foreign spirits. If his fur is revealed, offer a "sicerah ox" to drive away darkness. If his entire body is exposed, give him a "bus buffalo" to ensure the safety of all. This will become a common practice for humans to follow in the future.

Drawing from Bellah's perspective, the traits of Batak customs and culture can be generally classified based on the aforementioned category. This noteworthy phenomenon demonstrates that cultural transformations are intrinsically linked to the social landscape of society. This truth can be further examined by referring to Hutauruk's viewpoint, which elucidates the state of Batak land during the colonial era and the Indonesian independence movement from 1899 to 1942 through a doctoral thesis completed at Hamburg University in 1980 (Hutauruk, 1993). In his research, Hutauruk pinpointed specific time periods during which customs underwent changes, namely traditional, pre-modern, and modern.

### A. First - Traditional (before 1825).

The Batak people acknowledge the belief that the world and the cosmos are one and the same, comprised of three continents: the upper continent (banua ginjang), the middle continent (banua tong a), and the lower continent (banua toru) (Tobing, 1963). According to Sinaga (2014), the Batak people perceive God as having both transcendent and immanent qualities. Tobing (1963) further explains that God's existence transcends both space and time.

The upper continent serves as the abode of *Mulajadi na Bolon* and his angels, while the central continent is the earth, where all living beings, including humans, animals, and plants, carry out their daily activities. The lower continent is where the dead reside. The Batak people hold the belief that the unity between humans and the cosmos is the reason why proper rituals for the dead must be performed, as a sign of respect for the land (banua toru). This view emphasizes that nature must be treated with care because it is the source of life, and that harmony is central to all Batak customs and culture (Tobing, 1963). Thus, the Batak people have always placed great importance on preserving the natural environment and carrying out rituals in a proper manner.

In relation to the divine and immanent nature of God, it is possible to conduct religious activities and carry out worship rituals to the revered deity anywhere, as God's presence is omnipresent and eternal. Places that exude a powerful aura, such as vast lakes, waterfalls, high mountains, and particularly Mount *Pusuk Buhit*, which is deemed sacred and considered the spiritual center of the Batak people's map (Situmorang, 1993), are believed to be the abode of the divine. Mount *Pusuk Buhit* holds significant importance to the Batak people as it is believed to be the site where the first Batak people descended from heaven and where life was initiated or created. The confirmation of Mount *Pusuk Buhit* as the spiritual center of the Batak people is rooted in their beliefs, which are supported by various references and sources.

A poem extols the virtues of Mount *Pusuk Buhit*, highlighting its majesty, love, and respect. It begins with a reference to *Sianjurmulamula*, then moves through various iterations such as *Sianjur tompa*, and so on. The term "anjur" denotes resignation, which is linked to the Batak ancestors' departure from the Haru Kingdom. They sought refuge in *Sianjurmulamula*, lending the name its meaning: starting, being born, moving, and forming personality traits. This embodies Batak spirituality, as seen in classic Batak poems like Sangti (1977). For many, this belief is classified as mystical in nature. This "mystical" condition, as described in the traditional period (Bellah, 2011), is also present in writings about the Batak and is sometimes linked to Christianity. Experts like Tobing (1963), Hutaauruk (1998), Parkin (1974), Sinaga (2014), Lumbantobing (1998), and Siagian (2017) have explored this connection in their writings.

According to a common Batak belief, there are three incarnation figures of *Mulajadi na Bolon*, named *Batara Guru*, *Balasori*, and *Mangala Bulan*. *Batara Guru* represents *Ompu Bubi na Bolon*, the Creator and Giver of Blessings. *Balasori* represents *Soripada Sohaliapan*, the Caregiver and Organizer. Meanwhile, *Mangala Bulan* represents *Ompu Bane na Bolon*, the Strength and Judgment. Although each of the three incarnations has different duties, they all work together to maintain harmony in the entire cosmos (Simanullang, 2021). These three names are also mentioned in several Batak mythologies, where they are believed to be the first gods and goddesses who live together with *Mulajadi na Bolon* in heaven (Siagian, 2016). It is suspected that these three names were influenced by Hinduism, considering that they also exist in Hinduism (Vergouwewen, 2004). Harry Parkin confirmed the influence of Hinduism, but denied that the names *Batara Guru*, *Soripada*, and *Mangalabulan* were synonymous with Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Parkin, 1978). Castle further strengthened Parkin's view by emphasizing that it was unlikely that Hindu influence was so deeply rooted in Batak beliefs, given that Batak was initially very isolated and deep in the interior of Batak land.



The connection between humans and the cosmos is evident in Batak customs, which dictate that the deceased are sent to the lower continent to be treated with kindness. This is related to the existence of a spiritual system involving spirits, demons, and souls. In Batak culture, the spirits of the dead are treated with respect through the rituals they perform, which are often linked to their social status. The reality of death and the associated rituals are divided into three parts: *mate makkar*, *sarimatua*, and *saurmatua*. The term *mate makkar* is not commonly used due to its sad connotations, as it refers to parents who have passed away without any grandchildren. In this case, the ritual is considered a cause for mourning and is known as the *mangido tangiang* ritual, which involves asking for prayers for the grieving family.

There is a term called “*sarimatua*,” which is employed to describe an elderly person who has passed away, but not all of their descendants are married. Conversely, the term “*saurmatua*” is applied to parents who have both passed away, and all of their descendants are married and have offspring. The child is referred to as the “*pahompu*” of the deceased. The social status with the highest esteem in terms of death among Batak people is referred to as “*saurmatua maulibulung*.” In this instance, the deceased’s parents have both passed away, and all of their descendants are married, even their sons and daughters have grandchildren who are the deceased’s “*nini*” and “*nono*.” No one has passed away yet in this situation. To honor the deceased, great efforts are made to have all of their descendants present during the death ceremony. The night before the ceremony, all of the descendants will perform the “*manortor*” and “*mangondas*” rituals, with their hands directed towards their chests. This is done to request “*sahala*” from the deceased, which refers to the charisma or good deeds they performed during their lifetime. The word “*sahala*” is invoked through the movements and body language of all the deceased’s descendants, which is expressed in the Batak dance called “*tortor*.”

The relationship between humans and the cosmos is exemplified through cultural symbols that represent *ulos*. The Batak people believe that *ulos* originates from the upper continent, as it was initially woven by *Si Boru Deak Parujar*, a mythological Batak woman who created the world with the authority of *Mulajadi na Bolon*. *Si Boru Deak Parujar* weaves *ulos* during her leisure time, as she was compelled to marry a man she did not like. The symbols and types of *ulos* used represent death itself, making *ulos* a symbol of Batak spirituality for the community (Siagian, 2024). Giving *ulos* as part of Batak customs thus signifies the spirituality of the person presenting the *ulos*.

Giving *ulos* should be done with care and attention to detail, and not haphazardly. Proper procedures and rules must be followed when giving *ulos*. The gift of *ulos* typically includes words of hope, prayer, and blessings for the recipient’s future. For the *mate makkar* ritual, the *ulos* used is the *ulos sibolang*, which is black in color with blue stripes to express deep sadness over the death. Max Weber, a sociologist, believed that religion is a part of custom, and therefore, the religious system is the primary material for forming ideas about God (Weber, 1978). Schumann, a scholar, also supported this idea, claiming that religion emerged from a Latin cultural context called “*religio*.” Although the term “*religio*” was later adopted in Indonesia, the factors and contexts that led to its emergence were different. According to Schumann, the unity of humans with the cosmos is also demonstrated through the belief that land originates from *Mulajadi na Bolon*. For the Batak people, land represents identity, has high cultural value, and is also economically and politically significant. Therefore, Batak customs have a number of rules that must be followed regarding land, including regulations for forest clearing for new settlements and *huta*, as well as rules about who can live in the *huta*. Typically, the *huta* opener’s surname (family name) is used as the *huta*’s name, and he is called the *huta* opener (*sipungka huta*).

The significance lies in the fact that in various conventional activities, the individual’s name is consistently mentioned and granted special privileges in the form of the right to express oneself

in customary language or the right to partake in the *jambar* ritual, which is a piece of meat as part of customary practices, while simultaneously holding the position of *sipungka huta*, which is seen as an inherited role. Human unity with the cosmos is also connected to space and time. In this case, the land, which serves as a representation of the entire cosmos, is also related to customs associated with livelihoods. For instance, in the village of *Nagasaribu Onan Harbangan*, North Tapanuli, there is a custom that has been passed down from generation to generation, which includes procedures for managing land and sowing seeds (Lubis, 2023). When the villagers prepare to sow seeds, they begin with a collective prayer with all the local residents. Historically, the ceremony took place on the edge of the rice fields, where the seeds were sown. It is crucial that all seeds are planted simultaneously in accordance with a mutually agreed-upon schedule. This highlights the interconnectedness of humans and space and time and also requires adherence to the rules of Batak cosmology, so that everything remains in harmony. After the ceremony, the entire community shares a meal together, which is meant to foster a sense of brotherhood and unity within the village.

Sowing seeds in the village requires adherence to specific guidelines regarding the type of seeds and timing to ensure an accurate prediction of the harvest period and to prevent the seeds from being susceptible to pests. If the harvest period is earlier than expected, the person or family may be subject to a fine. However, if weather or other factors cause a delay in the harvest, the individual must report the situation to Raja Patik to avoid any penalties. Raja Patik is a leader who oversees the implementation of the ritual and ensures that it runs smoothly. Failure to comply with the rules of Batak cosmology will disrupt the rhythm of the village and affect everyone. Therefore, everyone must comply with the rules to maintain harmony.

The residents of Nagasaribu who rely on tapping incense for their livelihood maintain a special ritual before working in the forest. The wife traditionally sends her husband off to work with a prayer and a hope-filled symbol, which is the making of *itak* or lappet by hand. This Batak food is made from stacked rice, flavored with sugar, salt, and coconut, and then shaped by hand until it is ready to serve. This tradition of making *itak* is still practiced today, especially by older families, and it holds a special meaning. *Itak gurgur* or lappet is not just a source of food for the husband, but also a blessing and prayer. It is then distributed to those who work in the forest, symbolizing shared enthusiasm, prayers, and hope. There is a belief among incense tapper families that if the husband is equipped with *itak gurgur* and lappet, the incense sap will be abundant.

During the early period in the Samosir area, respect for the land was highly valued. It was believed that the land should not be exploited, and thus, a harvest party was held through the *mangase taon* ritual at the appointed time. The purpose of this ritual was to provide rest for the land and maintain its fertility. This was requested through a series of rituals conducted in accordance with established rules and procedures. The ritual was not performed until all the rice was stored in the barn, and thus, this period was called *roborobo*. In the past, the *mangase taon* ritual was a grand affair, involving the element of *anesthesia*, which referred to the hierarchical government structure of Batak society, ranging from the lowest level to the highest level, known as *huta*, *horja bius*, and each led by a king called kings (Situmorang, 2009).

In the context of *anesthesia*, each monarch wields traditional authority and derives legitimacy from the elders. As long as he possesses the charisma of leadership and the accompanying qualities, his power generally persists (Weber, 1978). In this case, it is crucial to explain a vital and fundamental aspect of Batak culture, which is the concept of *sahala*. According to Weber's viewpoint, *sahala* refers to the charisma typically exhibited by prophets (Weber, 1978). Combined with his unique qualities, this enables him to be perceived as having great authority, thus becoming a *marsahala*. That is why King

Sisingamangara, King Huta, King Horja, and King Bius are seen as having great blessings because they uphold Batak customs that have been passed down since their ancestors' time.

Batak people believe in the existence of three elements within humans: the body (flesh), the spirit (tondi), and the soul (sahala). According to Siagian's "Sahala Theology" (2021), *sahala* is defined as "superior spirituality, superior quality, and superior character." It is created through the power of the spirit (tondi), which is carried out by the body, resulting in clarity in the heart to perform good deeds. Obedience to rules and laws is what leads to goodness, which in turn becomes a pattern of behaviour, or *marsahala*, character. Therefore, *sahala* is the ultimate result of following rules and laws, and it is the core of Batak customs. It encompasses all the good deeds that a person does as a manifestation of their obedience to *Mulajadi na Bolon*. When a Batak person practices Batak customs seriously and in unity with the cosmos, they are seen as *marsahala*, having good character. In practical terms, *sahala* is related to the entire system of Batak values, rituals, morals, and kinship (Siagian, 2021).

### B. Second - Pre-Modern (the period after 1825)

The introduction of modernization in Batak land at that time marked a significant shift from the 'mystical world' of Batak understanding towards more modern developments, with a greater emphasis on logic. This new culture, commonly known as Christianity today, was perceived as obsolete and inappropriate by many, who went to the extent of labelling those who did not adopt the new culture as *sipelebegu*. This term literally means asking for life from the devil (Tampubolon, 2012). Despite efforts to suppress Batak customs, the accusation still lingers in the subconscious minds of the Batak people today. Unfortunately, this focus on logical thinking only has not helped to foster the growth of Batak customs, as it has ignored the spiritual reality that characterizes civilized humans.

The social change that occurred during this time was that the Batak people became alienated from their own culture, the world of ideas and values that their ancestors had lived by. This systematic effort to ignore their culture was carried out through the 1861 Batak Raja church system (Hutauruk, 2001/2008), which included it as part of the rules of church life. The document served as a basic guideline and source for intervening in the way of life and behaviour of the Batak people. With a cultural politicization approach, the Batak people were directly taught European rules of life (Hutauruk, 1993). This means that Europeanization was already taking place in Batak land in pre-modern times.

The introduction of Christianity to Batak land at the beginning of its history had a significant impact on the Batak people's behaviour and way of life in various aspects. According to Hutauruk (1993), the Batak people were required to stop in the middle of the road, remove their headcloths, and pray silently whenever the bell was rung, even though such actions were considered shameful in Europe. As mission workers who lived in Batak land commonly used modern household tools such as bowls, glasses, plates, irons, clothes, and other equipment, the Batak people began to recognize and adopt these tools in their daily lives. As a result, traditional practices such as using bamboo pots for drinking and *sapa*, a large wooden plate used for eating together in Batak nuclear families, gradually fell out of use. Additionally, the use of *ulos*, a cloth used to cover the body, began to change to the clothing model commonly used by Europeans (Hutauruk, 2011).

The arrival of mission workers in Batak land and their zending activities led to significant social changes in the area around 1865, particularly the baptism of King Pontas Lumbantobing as a Christian (Pedersen, 1975). Several years later, in 1878, *Silindung* Batak land became a colony of the Dutch government (Hasselgren, 2008). This period witnessed the intertwining of evangelism by mission workers and colonization by the Dutch colonial government. The mission workers' need for security prompted them to seek help from the colonial government. As a result, *Silindung* became the entry point



for the Dutch invaders. The common honorific expression for the Batak people as *Anak ni Raja* and *Boru ni Raja* changed to Master and slave, making them second-class citizens in their own ancestral land, referred to as inlanders. This situation was not only limited to society but also permeated the church. The colonial government's primary objective in Batak land was to colonize, as explained by W.B Sidjaga in his book "Ahu Sisingamangaraja." Sidjaga stated that the colonial government had controlled almost the entire archipelago, and Batak land was recognized as the last area to be included in its colony (Sidjaga, 1982). Kozok also criticized the presence of mission workers at the same time as the colonial government in Batak land (Kozok, 2010).

In the Bius collective leadership model, where *Raja Huta*, *Raja Horja*, and *Raja Bius* are elected based on *primus inter pares* (the oldest among their peers), the selection criteria often include *sahala* plus or charisma plus, where *sahala* is based on "superior spirituality, superior quality, superior character" (Siagian, 2021; Siagian, 2020). However, with the introduction of a modern triangular pyramid structure by mission workers, the Batak government system with its egalitarian *anesthesia* system lost its power. According to Max Weber, this structure, commonly used in companies as part of the capitalist system (Weber, 1978), reversed the Batak way of thinking, which is centered on the unity of the cosmos in which *Mulajadi na Bolon* resides. As a result, the leadership model is now based on a leader and the authority inherent in the position itself, rather than *sahala* or charisma plus. This shift has changed the way of thinking and behaviour of the Batak people, where power and authority have become crucial to fight for using all available power and logic.

### C. Third - Modern (Since 1901)

The Batak people's access to the outside world was facilitated by the construction of roads across Sumatra, such as Jambi, Sibolga to Medan, by the Dutch colonial government between 1901 and 1907. This increased the number of migrant people from several cities in Sumatra, particularly in Sibolga, who travelled to inland areas mainly inhabited by Batak people. The main target areas were Pematangsiantar and Medan, where people usually went for work. However, the Batak war led by King Sisingamangaraja and his war troops had been going on since 1878, and one of the main factors in his defeat was the low quality of his war equipment, which was not comparable to colonial war equipment. Moreover, the opening of this road section put King Sisingamangaraja under increasing pressure, making it harder for him to move until he was caught and died in 1907. The Batak land experienced extraordinary social changes when the colonial government invaded King Sisingamangaraja, who fought with his troops against the colonial invaders. The momentum for social change occurred when the colonial government succeeded in capturing King Sisingamangaraja, who was respected as a famous Batak Imam, King, and *Datu*. Since then, the life of the Batak people and all their customs, which had been passed down from generation to generation, have been prohibited. (Sidbad, 1982; Siagian, 2016).

The Batak way of life, with its new customs, now utilizes modern currency as a legal means of payment in transactions, replacing the traditional barter system. The use of currency has its advantages, but it also presents certain challenges. For instance, it can be difficult to find specific people and goods to barter, and it can be difficult to agree on a price for a good or service. Additionally, the value of an item can change and is not fixed (Sari, 2016). However, the use of currency also allows for the possibility of saving or investing as reserves. Initially, currency took the form of coins, paper, checks, and securities. In recent times, the use of electronic ATM machines and E-transactions has become more prevalent in the digital era, and has been adopted by government and private offices, as well as other bodies. This has made it easier for people to make transactions, although cash transactions are still common. Bank cashiers continue to count money as part of their daily tasks (Bech et al., 2018).

This condition can motivate individuals to acquire as much as they can. An excessive longing for money results in behavioural modifications, which in turn lead to social transformations. Numerous studies have demonstrated that possessing significant amounts of money has altered the way people live, with their desires for goods and services playing a significant role. Additionally, it has influenced our attitudes towards money both psychologically, politically, socially, and in other ways (Gasiorowska, 2015). Over time, such changes in behaviour can become a social disease that not only fosters dependence on specific goods and services but can also further degrade the divine and human aspects of individuals themselves. In this case, the character of human beings is at risk. This viewpoint is consistent with Siagian, who emphasized that the main cause of the decline of *sahala* is the spirit of materialism.

### Conclusion

Since ancient times, the Batak people have lived in harmony with the cosmos, and this has been crucial in maintaining balance in their lives. The Batak people's entire existence is intertwined with the environment and time, with *Mulajadi na Bolon* serving as the center of the unified cosmos. However, external factors such as the arrival of the Dutch colonial government and mission workers in Batak territory have altered Batak customs, social interactions, and behaviours, as well as the character of the Batak people. As an integral part of the cosmos, the cosmos is believed to provide life to humans, and the Batak people have always preserved nature through various rituals. Today, these rituals must be reorganized to promote greater dignity in caring for nature, which is essential for ensuring human survival in the long run.

In the Batak church, the modern organizational system that has been in place since pre-modern times has transformed the Batak way of thinking from being intuitive to being highly logical. As the core of Batak culture, *Sahala*, which is strongly upheld by ritual leaders and community leaders, has become irrelevant. The Batak people's way of life allows for the integration of logic and human thinking, which in turn shifts the emphasis from the spirit, which resides in the deepest part of the human self.

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