This publication is made available online by

Swedish Institute of Mission Research at Uppsala University.

Uppsala University Library produces hundreds of publications yearly. They are all published online and many books are also in stock. Please, visit the web site at

www.ub.uu.se/actashop
Rural Batak, Kings in Medan

The Development of Toba Batak Ethno-religious identity in Medan, Indonesia, 1912-1965

Johan Hasselgren
ABSTRACT


This study explores the history of the Toba Batak community in the city of Medan from 1912 to 1965. The Toba Batak have traditionally lived in the rural interior highlands of Sumatra. In this region, their specific ethno-religious identity was developed. The crucial factor in the process was the activities and the theological convictions of the German Rhenish mission on which the Toba Batak themselves had a significant impact.

During the first few decades of the 20th century the Toba Batak began to migrate to the plantation region on the east coast of Sumatra and its commercial entrepôt Medan. In this region, where the Malay Muslim culture was the local dominant culture, they strove to fulfil their cultural ideals, among which the ideal of barajaon (kingdom) is central.

The main analytical question pursued is: How did the Toba Batak ethno-religious identity develop in Medan, within the framework of the ethnic, religious, social and political currents in the city?

This question is analysed in terms of their changing relations to their area of origin, the interaction with other groups in Medan and the efforts of the Toba Batak to build up their own organisations. The main focus is on the development of Christian congregations, but the analysis also takes voluntary, political and women's organisations into account. The changing conditions for local ecumenical co-operation are also explored.

A wide selection of sources is used, such as missionary reports and correspondence, Dutch colonial records and Toba Batak written and oral sources. Most of these sources have not or only partly been employed in previous research.

Keywords: Indonesia-Church history; Missions-history/Indonesia; Sumatra; Batak; ethnicity; Muslims-relations-Christians; National Churches; Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft; Missions-Theory-History; Batak Christian Protestant Church; Indonesian Christian Church; Ecumenical movement-Indonesia; Politics and Christianity/Indonesia; Japan-History/1937-1945.

Johan Hasselgren, Department of Theology, Uppsala University, Box 1604, SE-751 46 Uppsala

© Johan Hasselgren 2000

ISSN 0585-5373
ISBN 91-85424-57-9

Typesetting: Jens Pernander
Printed in Sweden by Elanders Gotab, Stockholm 2000
Distributor: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, P.O. Box 1526, SE-751 45 Uppsala, Sweden
Rural Batak, Kings in Medan

The Development of Toba Batak Ethno-religious identity in Medan, Indonesia, 1912-1965
To Maria and Elias
Acknowledgements

Over the years, many persons and institutions have contributed to this study. At the Dept. of Theology, my supervisors, Prof. Carl Fredrik Hallencreutz and Dr. Sigbert Axelson, have continuously encouraged my studies and patiently read and commented on my texts. Prof. Alf Tergel has been generally supportive and arranged with formalities with regard to the defence of my thesis. Dr. Axel Ivar Berglund has made valuable comments. Dr. Jonas Jonson introduced me to the subject of Mission Studies and in 1986 enthusiastically led the field-study trip that awakened my interest in Indonesia.

The seminar in Mission Studies has provided an inspiring academic context, although I have not taken part regularly during the last few years. Among my colleagues at the Dept. of Theology, Dr. Veronika Melander and Dr. Per Sundman have been stimulating partners in discussions about my research. At the Swedish Institute for Missionary Research (SIM), to which I moved in autumn 1999, the staff has provided facilities that were essential in enabling me to complete my project. The Rev. Gustaf Bjöck has arranged the practicalities with regard to the printing of this study and has been daily available to make comments and give advice.

This study would not have been made without the help of the skilled staff of the archives that I have consulted. These archives include the archive of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission in Barmen-Wuppertal, the Algemeene Rijksarchief in the Hague and its branch in Utrecht, the archives of the Reformed Church Mission Board in Oegstgeest, of the Dutch Capuchin Province in s'Hertogenbosch, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Leusden and the National Archives in Jakarta. I also obtained access to the Church archives of the HKBP in Pearaja-Tarutung, the GKPI, GKPS, HKI archives and the library of the HKBP Theological Seminary in Pematang Siantar, and the archives of the regional ecumenical office in Medan. Mr. B. P. H. Gultom in Medan and the Sarumpaet-Hutabarat family in Jakarta gave me access to their private archives.

I am deeply thankful to the persons I interviewed for this study. They welcomed me into their homes and graciously offered me glimpses of their lives over a cup of coffee. Special thanks go to the Rev. W. Lumbantobing for sharing his memories of Medan in the 1920s and 1930s. I have also benefited a great deal from the many persons with whom I have had chats and conversations.
Numerous people in Indonesia have commented on my research and provided help with contacts and in finding literature. In Medan, my host university was the Universitas HKBP Nommensen. I received sympathetic help and advice from Dr. F. H. Sianipar, Dr. A. Situngkir and Dr. O. H. S Purba, obtained much material from the Batak Documentation Centre and was given a place to stay at their guest-house. In Tebing Tinggi and later in Medan, my family and I were cared for by our friends Dr. Richard Daulay and Mrs. Julsinda boru Sirait. Dr. Daulay assisted me with literature and provided insights into Toba Batak church life and culture on numerous occasions. Mr. Sirait made ambitious efforts to teach me the Toba Batak language. I was also helped by Dr. Usman Pelly, Dr. Andar Lumbantobing, the Rev. A. Ginting Suka, f Wiro OFM Cap and Mr. B. P. H. Gultom.

In Pematang Siantar, I was made welcome at the HKBP Theological Seminary. Dr. A. A. Sitompul provided insights and contacts, and welcomed my family and I into his home. Dr. J. R. Hutauruk, the Rev. L. Sitorus and the Rev. R. Tanjung offered help and friendship. In my research, I have also benefited from contacts with Prof. Lothar Schreiner in Barmen-Wupperthal, and in the USA with Prof. Susan Rogers in Worcester, Mass., and Dr. Robert Boehlke in Hutchinson, Minn.

Dr. Axel Ivar Berglund and Mrs. Mia Melin corrected the English of an earlier version of my study, while Mr. Neil Tomkinson has corrected the whole final version. Funds for field, archive and language studies have been provided by Leanderska Fonden and Cornell University.

I am grateful to my mother and my father for their support and for providing me with an upbringing in which integrity and intellectual curiosity were fostered. Birgitta, my mother-in-law, has over the years provided practical and emotional support for me and my family in countless ways.

Although words are not sufficient to convey what I feel, I wish to thank my wife, Maria, for her love, encouragement, patience and our intellectual dialogue. I am grateful to my son, Elias, for being there and for taking my mind off my studies.

Uppsala, 20 March 2000

_Johan Hasselgren_
## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................................... 5

Abbreviations ............................................................................................ 14

Introduction

The emergence of a research interest: the Toba Batak and Medan ..... 15
The aim and scope of this study ............................................................. 16
Previous research .................................................................................. 17
Available sources and source criticism .................................................... 21
  Written sources .................................................................................... 21
  Oral sources and personal observations .............................................. 25
Interpretative perspectives ...................................................................... 26
  Mission studies: Christian missionaries and indigenous Christians ........ 26
  In search of an analytical concept: Ethnic identity and
  ethno-religious identity ........................................................................ 27
Some notes on terminology and spelling ................................................. 31
Plan of presentation ................................................................................ 32

Chapter 1
Medan: Capital of Sumatra's plantation belt

Introduction ............................................................................................ 35
The East Coast of Sumatra: Land of gold, labour of tears ................... 35
  A regional historical context: local powers and European colonisation .... 35
  The development of commercial agriculture ........................................... 40
  Ethnic pluralism and power structure .................................................... 44
  Educational alternatives .......................................................................... 48
  Early political mobilisation .................................................................... 51
Medan - a religious and ethnic microcosm .............................................. 52
  Administrative developments and urban growth ................................. 52
The ethnic geography of Medan ................................................................. 53
Ethnic change: The erosion of Malay dominance ..................................... 58
The early Church History of Medan ......................................................... 60

Chapter 2
Christian Mission and Toba Batak Ethno-religious Identity

Introduction ............................................................................................. 67
Toba Batak culture and traditional society ............................................. 68
The Toba Batak and the wider world ..................................................... 74
Development of the Rhenish Mission Society ................................... 80
Founding and organising a mission society .......................................... 80
Theological developments: From individual conversion
to the ideal of an autonomous People’s Church .................................. 81
The Rhenish Mission on Sumatra, its strategy and
Batak participation (1861-1930) ......................................................... 88
The general development of the RMG Batak mission ......................... 88
Einzelbekehrung and Volkschristianizierung in the RMG
mission on Sumatra .............................................................................. 98
Education as the main tool of progress .............................................. 108
Implementation of the Three Selves formula ................................... 114
A self-supporting Church ................................................................. 114
Educating indigenous co-workers ...................................................... 114
Toba Batak financial support and RMG crisis .................................. 117
A self-governing Church .................................................................. 119
Missionary authority and the Toba Batak quest for respect ............ 119
The role of Hatopan Kristen Batak ............................................... 122
The founding of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in 1930 ............... 125
A self-propagating Church ............................................................... 126
The formation of a Toba Batak ethno-religious identity ............... 128

Chapter 3
Toba Batak, RMG mission and the challenge
of Medan (1912-1925)

Introduction ............................................................................................. 137
Early Toba Batak migration to Medan ................................................. 138
Toba Batak migration and migratory patterns .................................. 138
The migration to Medan before 1912 .............................................. 139
The white-collar worker as ideal and stereotype ............................................ 141
Circular migration - a Toba Batak migratory pattern? ............................. 146
Family formation and the migration of women ....................................... 148
The making of an urban Toba Batak elite .................................................. 152
Not disclosing one's identity ....................................................................... 154
The RMG strategy towards Medan ............................................................. 156
Missionary perceptions of the east coast .................................................... 156
RMG ambivalence and co-operation with the Protestantsche Kerk ......... 159
A change of host: The Gereformeerde Kerken ......................................... 165
The pioneering work of the Rev. Josia Hutabarat .................................... 168
Relating to missionaries and ministers ...................................................... 168
Hutabarat's background and ordination ...................................................... 168
Financial crisis and conflict with European authority .............................. 170
Building congregation and community ...................................................... 174
The Toba Batak explore the Christian flora of Medan .............................. 174
The initial phase of the Toba Batak congregation ...................................... 176
The social role of the Toba Batak minister ................................................. 179
Concluding remarks .................................................................................. 181

Chapter 4
The mission challenged: RMG urban strategy and Toba Batak opposition (1925-1930)

Introduction ............................................................................................... 183
Contradictory Devolution .......................................................................... 184
New RMG initiatives towards the east coast of Sumatra .......................... 184
The removal of Josia Hutabarat from Medan ............................................ 185
Conversions in Protest ............................................................................. 190
The project to build a Church in Medan .................................................... 195
Toba Batak expectations of manjae ........................................................... 195
Internal conflict and negotiations with the Municipal Council ............... 199
The foundation of a mission station and independent Churches ............ 203
The conflict made permanent and the formation of Comité Parsadaan .... 203
The founding of Mission Batak on 17 July 1927 ...................................... 208
A mission station in Medan urgent ........................................................... 212
Renewed opposition and Partai 123 ......................................................... 215
Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo, 5 August 1928 ................................. 218
Underlying factors in the Toba Batak community ................................... 220
Social and political dynamics ................................................................. 220
The role of sub-ethnic tensions ............................................................... 222
Concluding remarks ............................................................................. 228

Kap 5
A vibrant community between recession and
Indonesian nationalism (1930-1942)

Introduction ........................................................................................ 231
Social developments in the Toba Batak community .......................... 231
  Economic recession and continuing social differentiation .......... 231
  The emerging Toba Batak women's movement ......................... 235
The consolidation of the HKBP in Medan ......................................... 238
  Remaining missionary authority in the HKBP,
  financial setbacks and a new initiative ........................................ 238
  General developments in Medan and the closing down
  of the mission station ................................................................. 242
  The Rev. Justin Sihombing and the birth of the first
  Toba Batak parsonage .............................................................. 245
  Relations with the independent Churches and continuous
  opposition to missionary authority ............................................. 249
  The striving towards Toba control of the HKBP ......................... 252
Establishing new ethnic congregations .......................................... 253
Ecumenical co-operation .................................................................. 257
  Intra-Toba Batak ecumenism: The example Pardomean Hot .......... 257
  Co-operation with other indigenous Christians ....................... 259
Cultivating particularistic and national identities .......................... 261
  The development of Toba Batak voluntary associations .......... 261
  Political affiliations of the Toba Batak .................................... 263
Concluding remarks ............................................................................ 267

Chapter 6
In the Shadow of the Rising Sun (1942-1945)

Introduction ......................................................................................... 271
A new hegemony established ............................................................. 272
  The expansion of Japanese power in Southeast Asia and Indonesia 272
  Establishing representative councils ........................................... 276
  Japan's economic policies ............................................................ 278
  The social consequences for the Toba Batak community in Medan 280
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7</th>
<th>Toba Batak in a Time of Revolution 1945-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Medan and the struggle for Indonesian independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political attitudes of the Toba Batak</td>
<td>The pro-Dutch political viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partai Kristen Indonesia and the need for a Christian nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational work between Dutch and Indonesian political interests</td>
<td>The development of Batak congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A HKBP congregation in Dutch-controlled territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With a Toba Batak minister in the middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The congregation under Dutch supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems of communication between East Sumatra and Tapanuli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical co-operation in Medan</td>
<td>A new context for ecumenism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T. S. Sihombing and ecumenical co-operation in Medan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The development of Medan within the province of North Sumatra** .... 354

- The framework of modern Indonesia .......................................................... 354
- The post-war development of a regional metropolis ................................... 357
- Ethnic change in Medan 1930-1988 and the pattern of ethnic settlements .................................................................................. 360

**A new phase in Toba Batak migration** .................................................. 364

- The migration of civil servants and business-men ...................................... 364
- Building up a Toba Batak kampung: The case of Sidorame ....................... 365

**Facets of congregational life** ................................................................. 370

- The general growth of Christian congregations ...................................... 370
- The emergence of the urban kampung Church ....................................... 372
- Organising spontaneous church growth .................................................. 375
- Conflict patterns and conflict resolution ................................................. 376
- The educational ladder: From primary school to university ...................... 378

**Ecumenical initiatives in post-war Medan** ........................................... 381

**Concluding remarks** ........................................................................... 385

**Summary** ............................................................................................. 387

**Sources and literature** ........................................................................ 389

- Archives ................................................................................................. 389
- Journals and newspapers ........................................................................ 391
- Oral Sources .......................................................................................... 391
- Unpublished books and articles ................................................................ 392
- Published books and articles .................................................................. 393

**Index of names** ................................................................................... 403

**Appendices** ........................................................................................ 407

- I. Toba Batak cultural terms ....................................................................... 407
- II. Status of the RMG/HKBP congregation and employees in Medan, from 1912 to 1950 ................................................................. 408
- III. The leaders of the RMG Batak mission and the HKBP from 1861 to 1965 .................................................................................. 409

**List of maps**

- II. Medan about 1940 .............................................................................. 57
- III. North Sumatra during the period of the RMG ..................................... 93
List of tables

I. Ethnic categories of East Sumatra in 1930 .................................................. 45
II. Ethnic groups in Medan in 1930 ................................................................. 54
III. Religious adherence in North Tapanuli, 1930 ......................................... 97
IV. The population growth of Medan, 1930-1980 ......................................... 358
V. The population in Medan divided by ethnic groups,
   as percentages of the total population ...................................................... 361
VI. The main churches in Medan in 1989 ..................................................... 371
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVROS</td>
<td>Algemeene Vergadering Rubberplanters Oostkust van Sumatra (General Association of East Sumatra Rubberplanters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEP</td>
<td>Christelijke Ethische Partij (Christian Ethical Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGI</td>
<td>Dewan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia (Indonesia Council of Churches)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBKP</td>
<td>Gereja Batak Karo Protestant (Karo Batak Protestant Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GKPS</td>
<td>Gereja Kristen Protestant Simalungun (Simalungun Protestant Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBS</td>
<td>Hoogere Burger School (High School for Dutch young people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIS</td>
<td>Hollandsch Inlandsche School (Dutch Native School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKB</td>
<td>Hatopan Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKBP</td>
<td>Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (Batak Christian Protestant Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKI</td>
<td>Huria Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULO</td>
<td>Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (More Extended Lower Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZG</td>
<td>Nederlandse Zendelings Genootschap (Dutch Missionary Society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARKI</td>
<td>Partai Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARKINDO</td>
<td>Partai Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNI</td>
<td>Partai National Indonesia (Indonesian National Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMG</td>
<td>Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (Rhenish Mission Society)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bat. Quotation or words in Toba Batak
Ind. Quotation or words in Indonesian
Introduction

The emergence of a research interest: The Toba Batak and Medan

The Toba Batak are one of the best-known ethnic groups in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in general. They are one of the Batak groups in the interior of Sumatra and are simultaneously self-conscious Christians and proud Batak. To other Indonesians, they are famous for internal conflicts, educational advancement, rough character and Christian commitment.

As a result of migration from their native area in the interior highlands of North Sumatra, they can now be found in almost any Indonesian urban centre. One of the most important destinations for Toba Batak migration was the city of Medan, the commercial entrepôt and centre of the plantation region in the lowlands of North Sumatra.

My interest in the Toba Batak began in 1986, when I participated in one of the annual study tours arranged by the Department of Mission Studies in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Uppsala. The students and their teacher travelled to Southeast Asia and those of us who visited Indonesia went to North Sumatra. On this occasion, we saw charnel-houses in the fields, painted with crosses. We spent Easter morning together with the Toba Batak, who gathered at the graves of their ancestors. I was intrigued by the obvious connections between Toba Batak culture and Christianity.

When I began graduate studies, I came across a few articles by the American anthropologist Edward Bruner, who in the 1950s and 1960s carried out field research among the Toba Batak in Medan. Bruner studied their ethnic voluntary organisations in relation to the multi-ethnic environment of Medan. These articles convinced me that Medan was not the large and rather dull city that I had passed through on my way to the interior highlands, but an interesting place. I therefore decided to devote my graduate studies to the history of the Toba Batak in Medan.

Since then, I have spent several periods of a couple of months of duration each in North Sumatra. The first was September to December 1991 and the second from October 1993 to May 1994, when I stayed in Medan together with my
family. The third visit occurred in June and July 1995. In North Sumatra, I have made interviews, gathered documents and printed materials from archives and libraries, and explored Medan on foot and by becak (bicycle rickshaw). In January 1993, I went to the Netherlands for archival research and in January 1995 I made another trip to the Netherlands and also worked in the archive of the Rhenish Mission in Germany.

I first studied Indonesian at the University of Lund in Sweden, and from June to July 1990 during a summer course at Cornell University in the USA. Even though I have not formally studied Dutch and German, I have, in the course of time, come to know these languages well enough to be able at least to read texts. The same goes for the Toba Batak language. I speak it very little but manage to read it with the occasional help of a dictionary.

The aim and scope of this study

This study is devoted to the history of the Toba Batak community in Medan, the capital of what today is the Province of North Sumatra, Indonesia. To gain more insight into this history, I have chosen to apply the concept of ethno-religious identity. The main analytical question pursued in this study is therefore: How did the Toba Batak ethno-religious identity develop in Medan, within the framework of the ethnic, religious, social and political currents in the city?

Because the Toba Batak are self-conscious Christians, the growth of Christian congregations and other Christian organisations plays the major role in my discussion. Most of my analysis of the Christian congregations is related to the largest Batak Church, which has its roots in the mission of the Rhenish Mission Society (RMG) and is now the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (Batak Christian Protestant Church, HKBP). In order to gain a more complete picture of the Toba Batak congregations in Medan, data from other Churches of which Toba Batak became members have also been taken into account. With my specific aim in mind, a study of Toba Batak history in Medan cannot, however, be limited to Christian congregations. I have therefore included analyses of Toba Batak voluntary associations and political organisations as well.

As a consequence of the aim of this study, I have chosen the year 1912 as the chronological starting-point. The Toba Batak migration to Medan started a few years earlier, but in 1912 the first Toba Batak Christian congregation was set up. It was also the very first Toba Batak organisation in the city.

To determine the chronological end-point has been somewhat more difficult, but I have decided to end the period under study in 1965, the year when
Gen. Suharto assumed power in Indonesia. The consequences of the new religious policies formulated and implemented in the late 1960s and mid-1980s for local developments in Medan will therefore not be taken into account. The same applies to the local ethnic and religious dynamics of the violent first years of the Suharto regime. These developments deserve a special study. The main problem with not extending the period in question after 1965 concerns source criticism, because some useful data stem from a later period. The solution of the problem is that I have been somewhat careful to make detailed statements about events before 1965 from data gathered later.

Previous research

The study of the Toba Batak in Medan can be seen from several angles and is related to various disciplines. Here I shall highlight two important contexts to which the analysis in this study will relate.

The first context is the study of the history of Christianity in Indonesia. Such studies generally depart from one specific denomination, and since Christian churches, especially outside Java, are rural-based, Church life in cities has not been of particular interest. This applies to the study of the various Churches of North Sumatra, of which the largest is the HKBP. There are now several studies on the history of the HKBP and the other Churches.¹ The only scholar who has integrated the study of developments in Medan is J. R. Hutauruk in his dissertation on the process towards the full independence of the HKBP from the authority of European missionaries, Die Batakkirche vor Ihrer Unabhängigkeit (1899-1942). He has devoted a section in his study to the conflict in the Toba Batak community in the 1920s that led to the formation of two independent Churches. He interprets this development in the general perspective of the Toba Batak discontent with missionary authority that, eventually, led the missionaries to transform the mission into a Church in 1930.

In relation to Hutauruk's research, I shall make a more detailed analysis of the developments in Medan that he discusses and put them clearly into the context of Church and ethnic developments in Medan. I shall deepen Hutauruk's analysis on several points, using a wider spectrum of sources than he did.

Because Medan was outside the so-called comity regulations, which assigned a specific area to a specific Christian mission, Christian congregations had liberty to

establish themselves freely in the city. The specific emphasis on Medan then has the natural effect that Church relations and ecumenical co-operation come into focus.

Despite the strong, post-war emphasis on co-operation in Indonesian Church life, centred on the Indonesian Council of Churches, most Indonesian Church history is still written from the perspective of individual Church organisations. They seldom take the various relations with other Churches seriously into account. It is, for instance, illuminating that the two major (Protestant) Indonesian Church histories, whose of Müller-Krüger (1968) and van den End (1987 and 1989), are almost entirely structured according to the history of specific Churches in the various regions of Indonesia. The same characteristic applies to a regional investigation made in 1976 in North Tapanuli, initiated by the Indonesian Council of Churches. Ecumenical work and Church relations in Medan have not previously been analysed but will feature as one important aspect of my study. In this perspective, this study will be a contribution on the micro-level to our knowledge of the preconditions and the character of Church relations and ecumenical cooperation both before and after the Indonesian Council of Churches was founded in 1950.

The second context to which this study relates is the research on ethnic developments in Indonesian cities. In relation to the general studies of urban developments, this is only a minor feature. The reasons are not only that research on inter-ethnic relations has been a somewhat sensitive issue in independent Indonesia, but also that social and economic developments have attracted the attention of scholars more.

Several studies have been undertaken with a specific focus on ethnic developments and ethnic groups in Medan. The first was by the anthropologist Eduard Bruner, who in the 1950s and 1960s collected data about the Toba Batak voluntary organisations in the city and has since written several articles. Contrary to the then prevalent notion of the Chicago School that ethnic divisions in the process of modernisation would be replaced by class divisions, Bruner argued that this was not necessarily the case. At least in Medan, ethnic life was alive and well. Among the Toba Batak, he noticed the importance of voluntary ethnic associations. They represented a new form of organisation that was based on voluntary membership, in contrast to the clan system, into which one was born. He also

---

2 See Lempp 1976.

3 An indication of the state of the art is a bibliography, compiled in 1986, of research and reports relating to developments in Indonesian cities. It includes about 700 entries, but only about 30 relate to ethnic developments. Most of them discuss the development of one specific ethnic group in one of the major cities in the archipelago. Three or four of these studies are devoted to historical developments and only a handful of them are larger than an article. See Muijzenberg and Nas 1986.
made a comparative study of the Toba Batak in Medan and Bandung respectively. He found that in Bandung the Toba Batak, like all other ethnic groups, had to relate and adapt to the Sundanese majority in the city. They had to tone down their distinctive features and on many occasions tried to appear as Sundanese as possible. In Medan, on the other hand, there was no cultural majority to which other groups had to relate. In post-1950 Medan, the competition between ethnic groups was therefore tense, and he aptly called the city “a city of minorities”. In this situation, the Toba Batak did not modify their behaviour and they had no choice but to remain Toba Batak.

In relation to Bruner’s research I shall explore the historical dimension of these voluntary associations before 1942. I shall relate them to the changing ethnic landscape of Medan and show that their development was both earlier and more diversified than Bruner’s research reveals.

Lance Castles’ dissertation of 1972 about the history of the Dutch colonisation of the interior highlands, *The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency: Tapanuli 1915-1940*, is a thorough analysis of political and ethnic developments. In relation to the latter, he includes a discussion of a specific development in the 1920s in which the Muslim Batak group in Medan was split. A majority declared that they denied that they were Batak altogether. In this study, I shall relate the Toba Batak migration to this development but broaden the discussion of ethnic developments in relation to conflicts within the Toba Batak community at the time and conflicts between Muslim and Christian Batak.

The anthropologist Usman Pelly has in his dissertation, *Urban Migration and Adaptation in Indonesia: A Case Study of Minangkabau and Mandailing Batak Migrants in Medan, North Sumatra* (1983), primarily analysed the migration of two ethnic groups to Medan. Pelly interprets the process of migration in terms of the cultural mission of the respective groups, a factor that determines occupational choices and residential areas. The great strength of Pelly’s work is that he relates his discussion to the general ethnic developments in Medan, from the 1920s to the 1980s. He also makes use of his contacts within the Minangkabau and the Mandailing communities and his personal experiences of being a long-term resident of Medan. Pelly has been able to collect many statistics, the major part being a survey in which he has made a general ethnical statistics of the city, the first since 1930. The sizes of the ethnic groups in each district in Medan were determined on the basis of the records of the smallest administrative unit (bundulan). The migration of the Toba Batak is generally one feature in the background but is sometimes referred to as a generally well-known and, to some, a problematic development. Pelly also includes a discussion of the conflict among the Muslim Batak in the 1920s that partly expands Castles’ account.
I have benefited greatly from Pelly's research and his general framework. But my focus is on the Toba Batak. They will be discussed on their own terms, and my analysis will use primarily missionary and Toba Batak sources.

The sociologist Karin Adam in her dissertation of 1994, *Hamamjuon Bora-boru: Emanzipatorische Schritte von Toba Batak-Frauen im Kontext der Migration*, explored the roles and emancipatory strategies used by Toba Batak women in the process of migration to Medan. Her work is full of insight into the lives of Toba Batak women, and her major focus is on their situation in Medan in the late 1980s. In the introductory parts of her work, she gives a sketch of the history of the Toba Batak community in Medan until 1942, in which she has used some sources from the Rhenish Mission. She devotes only a few, very small sections to the migration of Toba women during this period, a regrettable fact with regard to her focus. The reason is probably that she was not able to make use of sources written in Toba Batak. Furthermore, her historical narrative stops in 1942 and from there she jumps to a discussion about women in the 1980s and 1990s.

In relation to Adam's work, I shall discuss the issue of the migration of women before 1942 in more detail. My analysis is based on an extensive use of the missionary documents and Toba Batak sources. I shall also continue the historical narrative after 1942 and discuss, for instance, the changing character of the Toba Batak community in Medan in the 1950s, which provides the basis for the developments analysed by Adam in the 1980s.

Daniel Perret's dissertation, *La Formation d'un Paysage Ethnique. Batak et Malais de Sumatra Nord-Est* (1995), is a profound study of the ethnic developments in the East Sumatra region within a deconstructionist framework. Developments in Medan play an important role in his analysis. Though he has a wide scope, his main discussion is of how the colonial power, aided by anthropologists and missionaries, in various ways made efforts to clearly define the borders between Batak groups and Malays. In Perret's work, the term “Batak” is always placed within brackets, but not generally other ethnic terms. The indigenous population were also part of the process and made efforts to modify and change their perceptions and identities. In order to discuss the latter aspect, Perret has made an extensive inventory of various ethnic organisations in the region from the 1920s. He builds on the research done mainly by Pelly but also by Castles and expands the number of sources and empirical examples. The principal value of his work is in its broad scope, its theoretical awareness and the wealth of material assembled. Its main general weakness is that he seldom relates himself explicitly to previous

---

4 This suggests that he is primarily concerned about the “construction” of the “Batak” but not in the same way about the “construction” of other ethnic groups.
research. The activities of the Rhenish Mission play a part in his discussion, but he does not make an attempt to explore the relation between the Mission and the construction of a Toba Batak ethnic identity. His discussion of the Mission is based solely on Dutch sources and he has not consulted the major modern works on it. This is partly responsible for the fact that he sometimes gravely misrepresents developments among Christian organisations.

In relation to Perret, I shall explore the institutional aspect of Christianity and its connection with ethnic identity. With regard to various, other, Toba Batak organisations, some that I shall discuss have been referred to by Perret, but I want to connect them more clearly with the development of the Toba community in Medan, as such, and the development of Christian organisations.

Available sources and source criticism

Written sources

The main body of the written sources used in this study is the missionary documents of the Rhenish Mission (RMG) in Sumatra. They can be divided into several categories. The first is the minutes of the annual missionary conferences. During most of the period until 1942, when the work of the RMG in Sumatra came to an end, these conferences took place in June. On these occasions, decisions were made for the coming year, but debates and differences of opinion are generally not clearly stated. The minutes were later sent to the Home Board for formal approval. These documents have previously been used by historians, but not generally the sections related to developments in Medan.

Another category is the annual reports written by individual male missionaries. These reports summarise the work of the missionary and the general situation in his working area. They were also sent to the Home Board and should be regarded as the official account of the work done during the year. A third category of missionary document is the private correspondence between the missionaries in Sumatra and between them and the leadership at home. The contents of these letters are sometimes of a more private nature and express more explicitly personal opinions about particular developments. Women missionaries did not generally produce annual reports. Their experiences were related in letters and occasional reports published in the magazine of the RMG women missionaries, Des Meisters Ruf.

One example is that the standard history of Tapanuli, Castles 1972, is not referred to at all in his work, even though developments in Tapanuli feature as an important subject in it.
I have mainly used reports collected in the station files of Pematang Siantar and Medan and the private correspondence from the missionaries placed there. Some of them have previously been used by Adam and Hutauruk but have not been analysed in detail. In the correspondence of Nommensen, the missionary pioneer who died in 1918, I have not found any material related to the Toba Batak in Medan.6

Other western sources are documents from the Dutch Gereformeerde congregation in Medan and the written accounts of the Catholic mission in the same city. These documents and reports have not been explored previously. With regard to the Medan congregation of the Protestansche Kerk, the unitary Protestant Church in the colony, I have not been able to locate their documents.

In order to complement these Church and missionary sources, I have used the reports of the regional, Dutch, intelligence organisation and the minutes of the Municipal Council of Medan. The latter source has not been used previously, while the paragraphs of the former that I refer to have been utilised by Perret. For this study, it has been beyond my capacity to gather primary sources from various Muslim groups and organisations in Medan in a search for their views of the Toba Batak. Instead, I have made use of especially Castles’s, Pelly’s and Perret’s research, in which Muslim attitudes to the Toba Batak are discussed.

In this study, I have used a number of Toba Batak written sources. Almost all are written in Toba Batak, but a few in Indonesian. The single, most important source of this kind is the book about the history of the first Toba Batak congregation in Medan affiliated to the Rhenish Mission. I frequently refer to this source and it deserves a somewhat detailed presentation.

The book was written in Toba Batak by J. Tampubolon for the 25-year jubilee of the congregation in 1937. The full title is Olop-olop 1 aug 1912-1 aug 1937 Jubileum si 25 taon ni Hoeria Kristen Batak Protestant. Olop-olop means “shout of joy”. The author was at the time the teacher of the congregation. He was also one of the first Toba Batak in Medan and he claims that he settled in the city in 1909. He was employed by the state-owned Opium Company (Opiumregie).8 According to Tampubolon, the sources he used were his own memories and recollections of other Toba Batak in Medan whom he had consulted.9 But he also uses docu-

6 Although Nommensen visited Medan several times, his personal file does not include any written material related to the city. The documentation of his personal activities during the final years of his life is not impressive and, according to Prof. L. Shreiner, Nommensen also objected to keeping a personal file.
7 Tampubolon 1937, pp. xvi, 66.
8 Tampubolon 1937, p. 66. In one passage, he relates in much detail the employment of Toba Batak by this organisation an account, which very likely derives from the fact that he relates his own experiences. See Tampubolon 1937, pp. 21f.
9 Tampubolon 1937, p. xvi.
ments, some of which are included, partly or in toto, in the text, and probably a personal diary in which details were written down.

With regard to the structure of the work, the introductory part includes a few written greetings, from a missionary and from a Dutch minister, both of whom played an important role in the development of the congregation, and from the Toba Batak minister of the congregation at the time. This part also includes photographs and short texts about the acting church council and an obituary of the first Toba Batak minister in Medan. The introduction itself and the fact that it was written by the teacher employed by the congregation gives the work an official character. It should be seen as an officially accepted history, even though it is the work of an individual author.

After the introduction follows the main text of 73 pages. It begins with a section describing the general development of the east coast region and the city of Medan. The remaining part deals with the development of the Toba Batak congregation until 1937. This text is divided into 54 smaller paragraphs, which individually highlight a specific theme. They are arranged roughly in chronological order. This section is more or less clearly divided into six large sub-sections. The first deals with the Toba Batak migration to Medan and the east coast region before 1912, the remaining five with what happened during the period when a certain indigenous minister or western missionary was stationed in Medan. The paragraphs that mark off the beginning of the duty of a new minister or missionary are introduced by “what happened during the time of” (Bat. “Na masa di tingki ni …”) such and such a minister or missionary.

As a work of history, Tampubolon's book is more a personal interpretation of various episodes than an analytical, historical narrative. It is an interesting work, because it is one example of a Toba Batak perspective on developments in Medan. Tampubolon's frame of reference is that of the whole Toba Batak community. The border line between the development of the congregation and that of the community in general is not clear-cut. As a consequence, Tampubolon includes information about the development of other Toba Batak organisations and some short notes about other Christian denominations and organisations in Medan that the Toba Batak joined. The author is in principle loyal to the Rhenish Mission, but on several occasions includes a subtle but clear criticism of actions undertaken by the missionaries. Furthermore, he relates many events not highlighted in missionary reports, some of which were obviously omitted because of their sensitive nature. In relation to internal conflicts in the community, he is often willing to describe the perspectives of both groups even when he himself takes sides.

Even though the work has a specific structure and perspective, it appears to be generally a trustworthy guide to the events it relates. When I have been able to
check his narrative in relation to missionary documents and Dutch colonial records, the accounts generally converge. The dates, for instance, are exactly or almost exactly the same. Tampubolon’s book is, in other words, an indispensable source for the study of the history of the Toba Batak community in Medan. Furthermore, I shall follow in his footsteps, in the sense that I shall attempt to take the whole community and different Church organisations into consideration.

Only small sections of Tampubolon’s work have been utilised in previous research. The part that relates to the conflicts in the congregation in the 1920s has been used by the church historian Hutauruk. Adam has in a few cases used a translation into Indonesian of the book.10 The problem with the translation is that it is selective and much more Church-centred than the original work.11

Apart from Tampubolon’s work, other, written, Toba Batak sources include a small number of articles, reports and biographies of ministers who worked in Medan before 1950. I have also made use of documents from two private archives. Some of these sources have been used previously, but generally not in a detailed way.

In order to follow the developments after 1950, I have used a number of local parish histories. Some were produced in connection with the HKBP jubilee in 1986. Another category is the reports from Medan written in the 1950s by the Rev. H. Marbun. These reports have been collected by the Batak Documentation Centre of the Universitas HKBP Nommensen in Medan. These two categories of sources have not previously been used in research.

With regard to the amount of available written sources, it should be noted that sources directly referring to the Toba Batak in Medan during the period of Japanese occupation (1942-45) are scarce. The situation is only moderately better for the 1945-50 period. As an effect of the Japanese take-over of Indonesia, communications with the world outside the Japanese empire were broken. They were only partly resumed after 1945. This period of turmoil did not encourage the writing and preservation of documents and reports. Another reason is that a majority of Toba Batak left Medan in 1942, only to return by the late 1940s. As regarded the largest Church, the HKBP, the demise of missionary power in the Church in 1940 implied that reports made by the missionaries and the Toba Batak ministers did not reach the archives of the mission headquarters in Germany. Quite a large collection of reports and documents has been preserved in the HKPB archive, but, at least in 1994, a large part of the archive was not in order after having been thrown into a garage.

10 It forms one section in a volume produced when the congregation in 1986 celebrated the 75-year jubilee of the HKBP in Medan. The congregation decided to arrange this celebration one year before the 75th year had passed, mainly because the HKPB celebrated its 125th anniversary that year.
Oral sources and personal observations

Apart from the written sources, I have also made several interviews with Toba Batak Christians in North Sumatra. Most of these interviews took place in people's homes, and I often asked them to relate the story of their own life before asking them more specific questions. In most cases, the people I interviewed were or had been active in the Medan Churches. In some cases, they were very old and it was possible to talk only about very basic things.

Except for a few women, all the persons interviewed were men. Men often hold leading positions in the churches, and, while I was interviewing a man, his wife was mostly, but not always, silent or served coffee. It would perhaps, but not necessarily, have been easier for a woman researcher to establish better contact with the women. In a few cases, the person I interviewed has not been identified in the footnote, when the information given might have been embarrassing. Interviews were made in Indonesian. To obtain a Toba Batak perspective on the matters discussed, it would probably have been better to use Toba Batak. On the other hand, for the Toba Batak in Medan, Indonesian is either the second language that they speak fluently or even their first language. I have practically all the interviews on tape in my private archive.

Even though I am not an anthropologist and did not attempt any structured, participatory observation, my own impressions are occasionally useful, because they complement the information from the interviews and the contemporary written sources. In this category of observations, I also include the many chats and conversations I have had with people in Medan that were never recorded. The nearest that I come to playing the anthropologist is in the section on the Sidorame area in Medan in the last chapter. Especially when I stayed at the guesthouse of the Nommensen University on Jalan Sutomo, I visited the area quite frequently. Sometimes, I went there on my own initiative, in order to meet with people, attend worship and, later on a few occasions, to stroll around to get to know the area better. I have also several times been taken there by Toba Batak friends to eat at one of the Toba Batak restaurants in the area.
Interpretative perspectives

Mission studies: Christian missionaries and indigenous Christians

For this study, the academic context of mission studies has provided an influential, interpretative perspective. In my academic tradition, mission studies seek to study Christianity in relation to other religions and non-western cultures, within the context of political, economic and social developments. One important focus is the study of western missionary organisations and their activities and ideologies in non-western countries. This tradition has been the classical one. In the 1980s, new impulses to this kind of study came, for example, from anthropologists who started to study missionaries and missionary organisations as noteworthy anthropological objects. Another tradition is the study of local Christianity, i.e. of how indigenous Christians have interpreted, organised and practised their faith within their specific cultural and political context.

Sometimes these two traditions are held up in contrast to each other and described as conflicting paradigms. One interpretation is that missionary Christianity was permeated political and cultural imperialism. Therefore, the main interest of historians should be to study the endeavours of local Christians to indigenise Christianity and oppose missionary agendas.

Because of my focus on the dynamics of indigenous Christians in a specific urban milieu, this study relates mainly to the second tradition. However, I do not think it is fruitful in research to distinguish sharply the two perspectives. The study of missionary organisations and ideologies is, in my view, necessary in order to understand the development of indigenous Christianity. It provides one crucially important framework to which non-western Christians relate. Furthermore, these Christians are not passive in relation to western missionary organisations and missionaries and influence the course of events in various ways. Non-western Christians thus simultaneously condition and are conditioned by the missionary framework.

As an effect of this basic perspective, I have in this study included several sections on missionary perceptions, priorities and strategies. In Chapter 2, devoted to the endeavours of the Rhenish Mission in Sumatra, they play a crucial role. But it is also necessary to discuss them in the chapters devoted to developments in Medan.

12 For an overview of the study of "missionary tribes" in the 1980s, see Smith Kipp 1990, pp. 1-6.
In search of an analytical concept: Ethnic identity and ethno-religious identity

In order to gain more insight into Toba Batak history in Medan, it is important to develop an analytical framework. The aim is to go beyond the simple presupposition that the only “thing” connecting the various activities of Toba Batak in Medan is simply that they were undertaken by Toba Batak.

It would be attractive, I think, to make use of the well-established concept of ethnic identity. This would do justice to my broad scope, which includes mainly Christian congregations but also voluntary associations and political organisations. The concept would enable me to integrate the analysis of these different organisations by virtue of their ethnic character.

I shall, at this point of the discussion, relate some important and, to me useful aspects of the debate of how to study ethnic identities. My main guide in this endeavour has been Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s overview of anthropological approaches to the study of ethnic identity in *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*.

During the colonial era, ethnic groups were generally regarded as stable distinct entities, it is said, sharing a homogeneous culture. They were simply “there” for anthropologists to study, colonial powers to subjugate or missionaries to convert to Christianity. In 1954, the study of ethnic groups received new impulses through the publication of Edmund Leach’s *Political Systems in Highland Burma*. Leach argued that social organisation, rather than a commonly shared culture, is the stuff that ethnic identities are made of. In 1969, Fredrik Barth followed Leach and in an article suggested that ethnic identity should be studied from the perspective of the social interaction of different ethnic groups. Boundaries between ethnic groups are upheld not by “objective” differences in culture, but by social processes of boundary maintenance between interacting ethnic groups. The general conclusion from these contributions is that ethnic identity cannot be understood unless its relation to other relevant groups in a specific context is considered.

Since Barth’s article, the study of ethnic identities has developed in several directions. One of them is the study of the historical development of ethnic identities, ethnogenesis. Even though ethnic identities were often regarded by previous researchers as “primordial”, numerous studies show that ethnic identities are generally creations of fairly recent times. In non-western contexts, western colonialism has in many cases been regarded as the major factor behind

---

13 Leach 1954, pp. 281ff.
ethnogenesis. In Hylland Eriksen's discussion of the historical aspects of ethnic identity, he does not explicitly deal with the issue of what internal actors or institutions were active in creating or mobilising what, in the analytical perspective, are ethnic identities. The general impression is that mainly external factors were important or that the group in question, as an undifferentiated whole, decided to adopt an ethnic identity. Bearing in mind that human societies in general are not without social boundaries and institutions, it is worth while to investigate what specific internal actors or institutions were of crucial importance in the process.

Another character of ethnic identities that has been highlighted is the ability of people to consciously choose what identity to stress or to manipulate ethnic stereotypes to their own advantage. People may oscillate between different identities or make their own context-bound definitions or reinterpretations of who they are. These dynamics have been described as the "ethnic game". In relation to the latter perspective, the problem appears of how "free" individuals are connected with ethnic identities. It relates to the general debate on actor-centred versus structure-centred perspectives. The opposition can, in terms of sociology, be interpreted as that between Weberian and Durkheimian models of society. Following the sociologist Anthony Giddens's effort to integrate the two perspectives, Hylland Eriksen concludes that "Ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both." There is, in a given situation, not an unlimited range of identities to stress or to manipulate. Options are limited by structural factors. The problem remains, which actors and structures to emphasise in studies of particular situations. Furthermore, the terms themselves are somewhat ambiguous. Is structure, for instance, just the general limiting factors of individual behaviour or can it be applied to organisations in which individuals seek to fulfil their goals?

From this short exposé, it appears that ethnic identities, in the analytical perspective, far from being stable, timeless and archaic, are dynamic, conditioned by historical developments and context-bound. They are not simply "things out there", but fluid, processual, analytical entities.

---

15 For a discussion of some of these studies, see Eriksen 1993, pp. 78-92.
16 See Eriksen 1993, pp. 78-92.
17 To be fair to Hylland Eriksen, his analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism, which, according to him can be analysed by partly the same means as ethnic identity, includes, for instance, references to the role of the Norwegian city bourgeoisie in creating a Norwegian national identity. Eriksen 1993, p. 102. Similar discussions on "the national elite" often feature in works about the growth of nationalism.
18 For this term, see Perret 1995, p. 10.
19 For a short discussion of this debate, including his own perspective, see Eriksen 1993, pp. 56f. Quotation from page 57.
Despite the usefulness of this concept, the main problem is that it does not harmonise well enough with my particular focus. The consequence of using it would be that Christian organisations, in order to remain a major emphasis in this study, from a theoretical perspective, would have to be regarded solely as ethnic organisations. I would in that case only relate the Toba Batak ethnic group to other ethnic groups, which would lead to an impasse. It would mean that I would formally not be able to regard the Churches as religious organisations or explore relations between Christians and Muslims in this study.

In order to solve this problem, I have decided to use ethno-religious identity as the main concept in this study. It is so far not well established in the vocabulary of ethnic studies, anthropology or history for that matter. The label “ethno-religious” is sometimes applied to political or social developments in which the aim is simply to bring both religious and ethnic factors into focus, one after the other, not making any specific connections between the two entities. The hyphen acquires more meaning when the label is applied to groups, mainly in North America, where sociologists from the 1960s onwards concluded that it was useful to combine religious and ethnic criteria in the study of various subgroups. It was thought to be more meaningful in sociological terms to study, for instance, Italian Catholics and Irish Catholics, instead of American Catholics in general. Oriental Christians, Mennonites or Jews are also sometimes referred to as “ethno-religious groups”, because ethnic identity and religion are closely related.

One example of such an approach is Daphne Winland’s, who, in relation to Mennonite ethno-religious identity, analysed the contemporary Mennonite “game of identities”, in which different notions of identity “compete” for recognition in the face of changes in Mennonite society in North America. Some stress the religious identity, some the ethnic and some combine the two. Winland mainly bases her discussion on Mennonite academic writing and interviews with Mennonites. Furthermore, she relates her discussion briefly to the Jewish discussion about identity and sees many similarities between the efforts to define what the two groups “really” are.

With regard to non-western contexts, ethno-religious identity has been applied by Deborah Tooker to the Akha, a people living in the highlands of insular Southeast Asia. According to Tooker, the concept is meaningful because the Akha do not have separate terms that correspond to the western concepts of “religion” and “ethnicity” and instead employ the single behavioural notion of

---

20 For two examples of this approach, see Ganguli 1993 and Ahmed 1994.
22 Winland 1993.
The result is that an Akha who becomes Christian changes \( \text{zan} \) into the \( \text{zan} \) of westerners, while a change of beliefs is unimportant. It is therefore easy to change behaviour and return to traditional Akha \( \text{zan} \), if desired.\(^{23}\) Tooker thus explored the situational aspect of identity and the problem of separating religion and ethnic identity.

This discussion reveals that the inclusion of the word “religious” need not change the possibility of applying the above-mentioned characteristics of ethnic identity, to ethno-religious identity.

My use of the concept of ethno-religious identity is influenced by both Tooker’s and Winland’s perspectives. I use it to denote an identity in which the ethnic and religious aspects are closely interwoven and mutually condition one another, to the point at which it appears not to be useful to distinguish between the two, if one wants to understand how the people involved behave and perceive themselves. In relation to Winland’s perspective, it is, however, important to bear the “game of identities” in mind and to give room to see how people in certain situations choose to define themselves. I think that the discussion of concrete empirical examples will show that the concept of ethno-religious identity, defined in such a way, can be fruitfully applied in this study.

In relation to my study, three aspects of the above discussion are essential. The issue of the general historical dimension of Toba Batak ethno-religious identity will be explored in Chapter 2. I shall suggest that Toba Batak ethnic and religious identities appeared simultaneously, mutually conditioning one another, and that Christian mission was the crucial factor in this process.

The second aspect in relation to the general analytical perspective is that in this study ethno-religious identity in Medan is largely discussed in terms of institutional developments. The main organisations discussed are Christian Churches and congregations, but Toba Batak voluntary associations and political groups will also feature in my analysis. The emphasis is methodological and conditioned by the available sources. It does not, in other words, imply that I have taken a stand on the issue of how behaviour is related to belief in this particular case. But Toba Batak perceptions are, after all, to a certain extent inferred from the way in which they have organised themselves. An implication of this line of thought is that I shall not discuss the ethno-religious identity of individuals, but of collective groups.

\(^{23}\) Tooker 1992. The problem with her article is, however, that it is not clear what status the Akha Christians have. On the one hand, they have left Akha \( \text{zan} \) for western \( \text{zan} \), which seems to imply that they are not Akha any longer. If religious and ethnic identity are inseparable, it is, on the other hand, difficult to understand why Tooker regards the Akha Christians as a specific subgroup of the Akha.
The third and major aspect is, of course, that the theoretical perspectives discussed above will be integrated in the analysis in the main part of this study. Three facets are particularly important.

The first is the changing interaction between North Tapanuli, perceived as "the homeland" by the Toba Batak, and Medan, in terms of the change of the context in which ethno-religious identity is articulated. This facet relates to the perspective of ethno-religious identities being contextual and fluid entities.

The second is the interaction with other groups in Medan, corresponding to the view that ethno-religious identities are articulated in relation to other ethnic and religious groups.

The third facet is the organisational dynamics of mobilising ethno-religious identity in the new milieu. In relation to Winland's perspective, I shall discuss which identity the Toba Batak have chosen to stress in various contexts. I do not, however, generally presuppose that these "definitions" in Winland's vocabulary are necessarily in conflict with one another. Tooker's emphasis on behaviour in relation to switching religious adherence is only partly relevant to my study but will be considered in relation to some developments.

Some notes on terminology and spelling

Toba Batak is the most commonly used term to refer to the group under study. The problem is that the Toba Batak often simply refer to themselves as "Batak" (Bat. halak Batak, Ind. orang Batak, lit. Batak people). There are two important aspects of this usage. The first is that many of the two, southern, Muslim Batak subgroups do not accept that they are Batak at all, even though some people do. The background is that in the lowlands of Sumatra the term has been a term of abuse. Among other Batak groups, such as the Karo and Simalungun Batak, the people more or less willingly accept the label, although many prefer not to use it. The second aspect is that the Toba Batak, on the other hand, often call themselves "Batak" with the connotation that they are in fact the "real" and "most pure" of the Batak groups.

In relation to the term "Toba Batak", new problems appear on the level of analytical language. The first is that the Toba Batak in the Silindung Valley southwest of Lake Toba generally prefer to call themselves "halak Batak" (Batak people) or "halak Silindung" (Silindung people). The second is that, in the internal Toba Batak usage, "halak Toba" (Toba people) frequently refers only to the subgroup living near Lake Toba.
From this discussion it will be clear that there is no analytically satisfying terminology that in a simple manner reflects the self-definitions of the group of people in question. To use the term “Toba Batak” is in this study the best solution to the problem. It is neither too wide nor too narrow and follows the general use of the term in previous anthropological and historical research.

I have, for practical reasons, preferred to shorten this term and will use only “Toba” in the main text. “Toba Batak” will, however, be used in referring to the Toba Batak language. In some cases, “Toba” will refer only to the Toba Batak living near Lake Toba in contrast to other Toba Batak sub-groups. But it should be clear from the text when this is the case.

When I use the term “Rhenish Mission” or the German “Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft” (RMG), I refer to the mission of the Rhenish Mission Society in Sumatra. Often “RMG” refers to the collective group of missionaries who worked for the Society in Sumatra.

With regard to geographical terms, the residency of East Sumatra was in Dutch colonial times divided into several districts. I have used “the east coast” when referring to the east coast region (oostkustgebeid), excluding the area where two other Batak groups lived, the Karo and the Simalungun Batak. This latter area was merged into one district (Karo-en-Simalungunlanden). Today the two colonial residencies of Tapanuli and East Sumatra have been united in the province of North Sumatra. However, I have sometimes used this concept also when referring to the two residencies collectively in colonial times.

Regardless of the fact that the definition of the term “missionary” in Christian mission circles today often refers to both western and non-western Christians, the term is used in this study in a conventional sense, i.e. a westerner active in converting non-westerners to Christianity.

In regard to Indonesian and Batak Toba spelling, I have used the Indonesian orthography which was launched in 1972 and to which Toba Batak has been conformed. All quoted texts from before 1972 have been adapted accordingly.

Plan of presentation

In the first two chapters, I discuss the two, main, empirical frameworks of the study. Chapter 1 describes the development of the city of Medan within the context of the plantation economy on the east coast of Sumatra. Though the scope necessarily includes political and economic factors, the main emphasis is on ethnic and religious developments.
Chapter 2 explores the relation between Christian missions and the development of a distinct, Toba Batak ethno-religious identity. The relation is discussed in terms of the interplay between several factors. They are the Toba Batak society and culture, the Dutch colonisation of North Tapanuli and the ideals and endeavours of Rhenish missionaries in Sumatra.

After two introductory chapters, the remaining part of the dissertation, Chapters 3-8, discuss the history of the Toba Batak in Medan between 1912 and 1965. Chapters 3-5 are devoted to the development of the Toba Batak community in Medan during the Dutch colonial period from 1912 to 1942.

Chapter 3 has two foci. The first is the beginning of the Toba Batak migration to Medan and its social implications. The second is the establishment of the Toba Batak ethnic congregation and its development until the mid-1920s within the framework provided by the Rhenish missionaries and the Dutch congregations in the city.

The conflicts in the Toba Batak community in the 1920s are analysed in Chapter 4. These conflicts eventually led some Toba Batak to join other Christian congregations in Medan or to establish their own independent Churches. In order to follow the various stages in these conflicts, this chapter has a strict chronological structure.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the developments from 1930 to 1942. Apart from the general social developments of the community, a variety of Toba Batak organisations will be taken into account, mainly Christian congregations, but also voluntary associations and political groups. Toba Batak taking part in ecumenical activities will also be considered.

In Chapter 6, the discussion relates to the Toba Batak experiences during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945. The main focus is on the accommodation to Japanese religious policies.

Chapter 7 is devoted to an analysis of the development of the Toba Batak community and the Toba Batak congregations, ecumenical co-operation included, during the period of struggle for Indonesian independence from 1945 to 1950. A section on the political attitudes and organisations of the Toba Batak during this period has also been included.

The last chapter, Chapter 8, discusses the post-war developments until 1965. New, social dynamics, which implied the foundation of Toba Batak ethnic areas (kampungs) and the birth of the kampung Church are analysed. The implications for the build-up of new congregations and ecumenical relations are also considered.
CHAPTER 1

Medan: Capital of Sumatra’s plantation belt

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the historical developments on the East Coast of Sumatra and in its capital Medan. My main focus is on the religious and ethnic dynamics in Medan, but in order that the reader may fully appreciate the developments in the city, I shall start with an overview of the developments in the region as a whole.

The period covered will, by and large, be from the early 19th century, when the European colonisation of Sumatra began, until the 1930s, when the specific plantation economy of the East Coast was well established. Many of the aspects of East Coast society highlighted here would certainly remain relevant to developments in the region until 1942. But the effects of the financial recession in 1929-30 and the development of the Indonesian nationalist movement in the 1930s will be integrated into the main text of Chapter 5.

The east coast of Sumatra: Land of gold, labour of tears

A regional historical context: Local powers and European colonisation

During the 18th and most of the 19th century the eastern coast of Sumatra was dominated by two major powers. The first was the Malay Sultanate of Siak, situated roughly in the middle of the coast, just west of Singapore, and the second was the large sultanate of Aceh on the northern tip of Sumatra.

Siak was one representative of the wider Malay community stretching from the Malacca peninsula to many of the coastal areas of the Indonesian archipelago. The Malays followed an interpretation of Islam that is often labelled as “traditionalist”. This form of Islam integrated local traditions and respected the Sultan as the
proper religious and political leader of the community. To be a Malay was basically to practise Islam and to speak Malay. Foreigners could become Malays with relative ease, provided that they accepted these two conditions. The Malays have a long tradition of assimilating their neighbours, regardless of previous ethnic and religious origins. They appear as an ethnic group that had a distinct sense of identity while they were inclusive in accepting people into their group.

The Acehnese, on the other hand, represented a more distinct, local culture and had no similar tradition of cultural expansion. In the same way as the Malays, the Acehnese were closely identified with Islam after the state of Aceh was founded during the early part of the 16th century.

Between Siak and Aceh along the coast were four Malay sultanates, Langkat, Deli, Serdang and Asahan. Further inland lived the Karo, Simalungun and Toba Batak groups. Some of them lived in the lowland near the coast, while others dwelled in the highlands. The lowland Karo Batak lived in the so-called Dusun area, while the highland Karo Batak inhabited the area around the present towns of Berastagi and Kabanjahe. The Simalungun Batak lived south of the Karo, both in the lowland and in the highlands up to the mountains east of Lake Toba. The Toba Batak lived mainly in the interior, around and south of Lake Toba but were also present in the lowland further south, nearer to the coast, in the area between the Asahan and Barimun Rivers.

The Malay sultanates had gradually increased their influence over the Batak groups living in the lowland, assimilating many of them into Malay culture. The sultans had, for instance, a strong tradition of intermarriage with prominent Batak families. Even though the Malays readily accepted foreigners into their culture, they had strong prejudices against those who had not yet crossed the line into "civilised life". The Batak groups in the interior were despised and "Batak" was a term of abuse. The people in the interior of the island were regarded as primitive cannibals.

Apart from the sultanates, there were on the east coast about 30 small Batak or Malay kingdoms (kerajaan), basically a number of villages that recognised one village head as chief (rja) and paid tribute to him.

During the 1820s, all the sultans recognised the authority of Siak. But in the 1850s, the Sultan of Aceh sent troops to the area and made the Sultans of Langkat,

---

1 For an account of the development of Islam in the region with special reference to various Sufi orders (tarekat), see Perret 1995, pp. 187-192.
2 Pelzer 1978, pp. 2f.
3 Pelzer 1978, p. 3.
4 Castles 1972, p. 179.
5 Pelly 1983, p. 67.
Deli and Serdang his vassals. Because of internal problems the Sultan of Siak did not assist them.\footnote{Pelzer 1978, p. 10.}

During the 19th century the indigenous powers in the region were gradually forced to give way to the interests of Europeans. In Southeast Asia, the British had a main base in Penang on the Malacca peninsula, from where they were eager to expand their political and commercial interests, not only on the Malacca peninsula, but also in Sumatra and Borneo.

The Dutch had their base on Java. Since 1602, Dutch interests in the region had been delegated to the Dutch East India Company (VOC), an enterprise set up primarily for trade, not territorial colonisation. As a result of mismanagement the Company was dissolved in 1800. The state took over responsibility for the Company's assets and placed its highest colonial official, the Governor-General, in Jakarta. In 1811, the Dutch suffered a humiliating defeat by the British, when the latter invaded Jakarta. The British held the city until 1816, when it was returned to the Dutch as a result of the end of the Napoleonic wars. During the British period Stamford Raffles, the future founder of Singapore, was stationed in Jakarta as Lieutenant-Governor. Under his leadership, the British conquered the Sultanate of Jogyakarta. The action portended a new type of colonialism in Java, where Europeans were to impose their power directly on a territory and do whatever they pleased with indigenous institutions. After the British, the Dutch continued with the same policy and, as an effect of the so-called Java War (1825-30), they came to effectively control all the Javanese sultanates. The foundation had now been laid for a colony proper called the Netherlands East Indies.

During the first few decades of the 19th century, Sumatra was an island in which both Dutch and British political and economic interests were involved, but as an effect of the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824, it became formally the exclusive domain of the Dutch. Excluded from the Dutch sphere of interest was Aceh, whose independence the Dutch promised to respect.\footnote{Pelzer 1978, p. 7.}

Dutch expansion on Sumatra was given a new impetus during the Padri War (1821-38). In the Minangkabau area, Dutch forces intervened in the civil war between the traditional Muslim royal family and modernist Muslims (Padris). In 1837, Dutch troops finally managed to seize Bonjol, the Padri stronghold. As an effect of the war, Dutch troops occupied parts of the southern sultanates on the east coast. The troops were, however, soon withdrawn.\footnote{Pelzer 1978, pp. 8f.} Instead, Dutch colonisation of the east coast became linked to its relation to Siak.
The Sultan of Siak had tried to solve his internal problems with the help of Adam Wilson, a British adventurer. But when the Sultan refused to pay the large sum of money Wilson demanded, his British helpmate drove him out of the capital. The Sultan now sought support from Dutch troops in Riau, the archipelago south of his territory. After the Dutch had reinstated him in 1858, the Sultan was, however, forced to sign a treaty, which implied that Siak, including the sultanates on the east coast, where it claimed sovereignty, would come under Dutch authority. The treaty gave the Dutch a legal claim to advance along the coast towards Aceh. By peaceful means, the Dutch managed, much to the dismay of the British, to sign treaties with the sultans, even though many of them were reluctant to do so because they felt that they had been betrayed by Siak when they had been attacked from Aceh. The Sultans of Serdang and Asahan initially supported Aceh but in 1865 were forced to sign treaties accepting Dutch sovereignty when Dutch steamers and troops arrived.10

In 1871, the basis for the complete Dutch colonisation of Sumatra was laid down in a new agreement with the British, in which the Dutch were given a free hand in Aceh on condition that they allowed British commercial interests to operate freely all over the island.11 In 1873, the first Dutch intervention in Aceh occurred. The strong resistance from the Acehnese led to the Aceh War, which lasted until 1903, when the province came under relatively stable Dutch control.

Under Dutch rule, the area of Siak and its former dependencies were made into the Residency of East Sumatra (Residensie van Oost-Sumatra). This Residency was divided into five main sub-units (afdeelingen): Lankat, Deli-Serdang, Karo-Simalungun, Asahan and Siak.12 The interior highlands were included in the Residency of Tapanuli. The Residency was divided into North Tapanuli, where mainly the Toba Batak and another Batak group, the Pakpak Batak, lived and South Tapanuli, inhabited by the Angkola and Mandailing Batak groups.13

In the East Sumatra Residency each sub-unit was divided according to how the Dutch related to local rulers. The agreements that the Dutch made with the sultans were “long contracts” (lange verklaaringen), which implied that the sultanates nominally remained “self-governing territories” with special rights to land and over customary law (adat). In contrast, the small kings (raja) were given only the opportunity to sign a “short contract” (korte verklaaring), which implied that they were regarded by the Dutch merely as civil servants. They received a small salary and a small portion of the revenue but did not obtain the same rights over

10 Pelzer 1978, pp. 10ff.
12 For a detailed discussion of the administrative development in the area, see Perret 1995, pp. 167-174.
13 See Chapter 2, section “The Toba Batak and the wider world”.
land and their subjects as the sultans. In spite of the differences in status, the Dutch use of these leaders implied that they increased their power over their subjects. The role of the Dutch, in this case defining a specific territory for each “traditional” ruler, implied that he could claim authority over the indigenous population in areas where he had not been able to before.

The development of commercial agriculture

Dutch colonisation had an important impact in the region, but it was intertwined with, and in some respects subordinate to, the flourishing of commercial plantations. The development of commercial agriculture started in 1863. In that year, Jacobus Nienhuys, a young Dutch planter, arrived in the area to explore the opportunities for tobacco plantations. The first efforts were promising, and eventually he returned to the Netherlands and founded the Deli Company (Deli Mattschappij). Many other companies followed. They were mainly backed by Dutch financiers, but there were other European interests involved as well. The Deli Company remained the largest. According to Pelzer, the Company was “the real power in East Sumatra, as its plantation empire spread through Deli, Langkat and Serdang.” During the first few decades of the 20th century, plantations expanded southward into Asahan and the Simalungun area. Plantations never reached the highlands around Lake Toba, mainly because of strong opposition from the local population and Christian missionaries.

During the last decade of the 19th century, the profits from tobacco decreased. Instead, planters increasingly turned to rubber, palm oil and other crops. Commercial plantations proved, however, to be extremely successful, and at the turn of the century the area had been transformed into a vast commercial garden.

On the east coast, power lay ultimately in the hands of the plantation companies, the Deli Company being the most influential. Once the Dutch political hegemony had been established, the companies could run themselves without

---

15 Reid 1979, pp. 47ff, 53, 117, Pelzer 1978, pp. 69f, 77 and Pelly 1983, p. 77. The last point is not clearly stated in the literature but is clearly implied in the whole process of dividing the territory into clear-cut sub-units.
16 The story of Nienhuys’ first efforts is told in Pelzer 1978, pp. 32-36.
17 For some examples, see Pelzer 1978, pp. 36, 40, 54f.
19 This development is implied in Pelzer 1978, p. 61.
20 Castles 1972, pp. 155ff.
21 The first decade of the 20th century saw a boom in rubber, a boom that continued well into the 1930s, while the cultivation of oil-palms flourished from the 1920s onwards. Pelzer 1978, pp. 52ff.
much interference from the local administration. In order to promote their interests, the planters founded lobby organisations, such as the Deli Planters Association (Deli Planters Vereeniging) in 1871.\textsuperscript{22}

In order to establish their estates, the plantation companies signed treaties with the sultans who leased out land, land that they had authority over under the "long contract".\textsuperscript{23} The sultans accepted that even though they remained political and religious leaders, they had no authority over plantation workers and European administrators.\textsuperscript{24} In exchange, the sultans obtained a percentage of the profits. Having \textit{de facto} lost their authority over most of their traditional territory, they were compensated by an enormous increase of their income. The three sultanates in which tobacco was first grown, Deli, Serdang and Langkat, were the ones that mainly profited from the system.\textsuperscript{25} The Sultans of Asahan and Siak benefited to a much smaller extent.\textsuperscript{26} An indication of this development is that in 1887 Medan in the Deli Sultanate replaced Bengkalis in Siak as the capital of the region.\textsuperscript{27} The term "east coast" (\textit{oostkustgebeid}) was therefore used to refer primarily to the centre of the plantation area in Langkat, Deli-Serdang, and not to the southern sultanates or the Karo and Simalungun sub-district where plantations were developed later and on a smaller scale.

As an effect of the continuous increase in the area of land used for plantations, the local peasant population faced a severe challenge. The sultan, whose power they may not even have recognised in the past, now leased out the land they used to cultivate. In areas where tobacco was grown, a partial solution to the problem was the so-called \textit{jaluran} system. When plantations cultivated tobacco, there was after the harvest plenty of land ready for use. The local population was given rights to a specific area, a \textit{jaluran}, where they could grow crops. After the \textit{jaluran} had been used, the land lay fallow for seven years. The harvest of tobacco and the corresponding \textit{jaluran} would then move on into a new area.\textsuperscript{28} As a consequence of the remaining land-rights of the sultans, the Dutch stipulated that only Malays could become \textit{jaluran} farmers. The result was that peasants who migrated from the highlands, mainly Karo Batak, had to become Malays if they wanted to cultivate the soil in the sultanates. The Malays themselves accepted Karo Batak as

\textsuperscript{22} For this perspective on the relations between planters and the colonial administration, see Breman 1987, pp. 143-155. For the founding of the Deli Planters Vereeniging, see Pelzer 1987, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{23} Reid 1979, pp. 43f.
\textsuperscript{24} Pelly 1983, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{25} Reid 1979, pp. 43f.
\textsuperscript{26} See Reid 1979, pp. 49f., for a discussion about the developments in these areas.
\textsuperscript{27} Pelly 1983, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{28} Pelzer 1978, pp. 49f. Reid 1979, pp. 46f.
“highland Malays” (*Melayu dusun*). The *jaluran* system was, in other words, not only a practical solution to the problem of how to integrate commercial and local agriculture, but also contributed heavily to the process of Malayisation.

When the planters started to look for people willing to become plantation workers, they found out that the local population was not willing. Instead, the plantation companies became dependent on a constant flow of imported contract labourers (*kulit*). These were recruited by very harsh methods and in practice lived as captives on the plantations.

The plantation companies encouraged the consumption of opium and the sale of opium was an important business undertaking. Opium was also consumed by the local population, but was mainly a means whereby plantation managers tried to keep their workers passive and in debt, so that, by the end of a contract, they had to sign a new one.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, opium was mainly handled by local *raja*. They bought opium on the Malacca peninsula and made great profits by selling it to their subordinates. In 1905, the Dutch authorities took over the sale of opium in areas under indirect rule, an arrangement that made the *raja* angry. The government then decided to make up to them for lost profits. At least until 1905, they were compensated with both money and opium in kind. The formation of Opiumregie in 1912 implied that the colonial authorities obtained a monopoly in the whole colony over the import, production and sale of opium.

During the latter part of the 19th century, criticism was levelled in Holland against conditions in the colony. The idea was launched that the Dutch should not only exploit the population of the colonies, but should also compensate them by providing material and other benefits. The policy was called the “ethical policy.”

---

29 Pelly 1983, pp. 77f.
32 Memories van Overgave Resident G. Schaap 1905, pp. 83f. ARA. Buiskool n.d. It is somewhat surprising that Stoler, who had studied the conflicts between the plantation workers and their employees, Stoler 1985, does not include the sale of opium in her discussion of labour control.
33 Memories van Overgave Resident Kok 1910, p. 51. ARA.
34 Memories van Overgave Resident G. Schaap 1905, pp. 83f. ARA.
35 Memories van Overgave resident W. J. Radher 1913, p. 27. ARA. On Java Opiumregie was launched as a replacement of the opium farms that were monopoly concessions to sell opium in a certain area. During the 19th century Chinese businessmen dominated the system. However, criticism of this system resulted in a state monopoly being launched, in 1896 in three residencies in East Java and in 1897 over the whole island. Rush 1990, pp. 198ff. As the title of this book, *Opium to Java*, suggests, the author does not, even for the sake of comparison, include a discussion on the opium sale in areas outside Java.
(ethische politiek) and represents the Dutch version of the white man's burden. During the first decade of the 20th century, it became part of official policy.

Conditions on the east coast of Sumatra were one important element in the debate, and adherents of the ethical policy criticised in sharp terms the treatment of the contract labourers. The best-known example is J. van den Brand, whose pamphlet De miljarden uit Deli (The Millions from Deli) in 1902 was a harsh critique of the treatment of plantation workers. It initiated a heated debate on the subject, both in the Netherlands and in the colony. Eventually, some restrictions on the plantation work-force were lifted and better health-care and education were provided. But, according to Reid, "they remained neither free nor well remunerated." 86

An important feature of plantation society on the east coast of Sumatra was its strong patriarchal character. Only the highest European personnel in the state bureaucracy or in plantation industries were allowed to bring wives to Sumatra. Lower European personnel had concubines, most of them Javanese. 37 Women were not generally encouraged to work on plantations, and male plantation workers were under restrictions not to marry or to bring families to Sumatra. Women were only 10-12% of the work-force, and almost all of them were Javanese. They received only half the salary of male workers. Many women were left with no other choice than prostitution. As a response to the criticism of these conditions, the planters stated that Javanese women were "whores by nature" and would use a larger income only to buy "cheap decorations". 38

In this society with a large male surplus, prostitution was regarded as a "necessary evil" on all levels of society. 39 In 1913, a red-light district for prostitutes was formed in the largest city, Medan. Brothels were classified according to which ethnic group they drew clients from. Prostitutes were also separated according to ethnic origin. 40 These conditions demonstrate not only the patriarchal nature of society, but also the fact that ethnic division was a factor in all aspects of life.

As an effect of the plantation boom, communications developed in the region. 41 The railway system expanded from the late 19th century onwards. Its main function was to care for the needs of plantation companies, mainly to trans-
port goods between plantations and Medan, including the harbour at Belawan. The railway tracks were consequently limited to the plantation area. The area around Pematang Siantar was one of the last where plantations were established and it was only in 1916 that the railroad from Medan to Pematang Siantar was completed. Nearer to Lake Toba, railway tracks were not built, for the simple reason that there were no plantations there.

An important breakthrough in regional communications occurred in 1915, when the Trans-Sumatra highway was completed from Medan to Sibolga, a small town on the coast of the Indian Ocean west of Tapanuli. The highway connected the towns and villages of North Tapanuli with Simalungun and the east coast, and made transport much easier than before.

Ethnic pluralism and power structure

The growth of plantations had the effect that the ethnic composition and hierarchy of the region changed dramatically.

The most powerful group in East Sumatra was the Europeans, who in 1930 made up only 0.7% of the total population. The two main groups were the employees of the plantation companies and the less numerous colonial administrators. In ethnic terms, they were mainly Dutch, but also British, French and Swiss. They also included a few Americans. Many assistants on the plantations came directly from various countries of Europe, drawn by the relatively high wages and the call of adventure. The planters were “stereotyped as coarse, hard-drinking, impatient of ‘culture’, of civil servants, or whatever else interfered with the efficient accumulation of profits.”

With regard to the plantation workers, they were at first imported from South China, and to a much smaller extent from India. From the late 19th century, difficulties arose in recruiting Chinese workers. Companies instead turned to Java to meet their labour requirements. In 1916 the Javanese were already three times as many as the Chinese, and in 1930 they made up 35% of the total population of the residency. The Javanese plantation workers remained under strict control on the plantations and did not generally engage in political and social activities. Even when they had left the plantations, they remained a permanent underclass. The

---

42 The history of the development of the railway system on the east coast is analysed in Weisfelt 1972.
43 Weisfelt 1972, p. 53.
45 Reid 1979, pp. 38f. Quotation from page 39.
46 Reid 1979, pp. 40ff. Statistics from Table 1, p. 40, and Table 4, p. 43. Perret 1995, p. 31.
Javanese population was, in other words, much less powerful than their number might indicate.

Table I. Ethnic categories of East Sumatra in 1930.
Adapted from Reid 1979, p. 43.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Indigenous&quot; Indonesians a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>334,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karo Batak</td>
<td>145,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simalungun Batak</td>
<td>95,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total &quot;indigenous&quot; Indonesians</td>
<td>580,879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Immigrant&quot; Indonesians</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>589,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toba Batak</td>
<td>74,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandailing and Ankola Batak</td>
<td>59,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minangkabau</td>
<td>50,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundanese</td>
<td>44,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banjar</td>
<td>31,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acehnese</td>
<td>7,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total &quot;immigrant&quot; Indonesians</td>
<td>882,189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indonesian groups:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>11,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>192,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (primarily Indians)</td>
<td>18,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total Non-Indonesian</td>
<td>222,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,685,873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a In this case, "indigenous" refers to the ethnic groups that were regarded as the original inhabitants of the area, in contrast to "immigrant" Indonesians.

Many Chinese former plantation workers remained in the region and were absorbed into the Chinese merchant community that traded in both Sumatra and
on the Malacca peninsula, including Singapore. First they started small businesses on the plantations, gradually expanding their commercial activities until they had become indispensable middlemen between the Europeans and the indigenous population. A few of them were able to amass large fortunes.

In 1930, the local population of the area found themselves outnumbered by immigrant ethnic groups. But the Malays were still the second largest ethnic group, representing 20% of the population. The Malays were in general farmers and remained loyal subjects of the sultans. According to Pelly, the strengthened role of the sultans in relation to the indigenous population and the ability of the Malays to continue to assimilate other groups imply that Malay culture should be regarded as “a local dominant culture” on the east coast, even after Dutch colonisation and the breakthrough of commercial plantations. I shall return to a discussion of this concept in relation to developments in Medan.

The growth of the plantation economy attracted people from the indigenous ethnic groups in Sumatra, although their numbers were much smaller than the Javanese. In 1930, the largest of these groups was the Toba Batak. Their traditional home area was the highlands of North Tapanuli. From the turn of the century, Toba Batak farmers started to migrate on a large scale into Simalungun, and a number of Toba Batak settled in the urban centres of the region.

Another important immigrant group was the Mandailing Batak. In South Tapanuli, they were brought into the orbit of the outside world as a result of the Padri War in the 1830s, when Dutch hegemony in the area was established. Simultaneously Islam became the dominant religion in the area.

Islamisation implied that the Mandailing were incorporated into the larger Muslim world. One example is the early migration of Mandailing to the Malacca peninsula. Already in the 1820s, there were Mandailing working in small-scale mining in Malaya. By the 1860s, they had become a recognisable group whose members engaged in trade and mining. From the 1870s, many small groups of Mandailing farmers settled in Malaya and became proprietors of tobacco or rubber smallholdings. The most popular port of departure was Belawan, the harbour near Medan. Other Mandailing migrants travelled by boat directly from Sibolga to Penang in Malaya.

48 These efforts were supported by the Dutch administration which preferred a Chinese monopoly on commodity trading. Pelly 1983, p. 177.
50 Pelly 1983, p. 77.
51 See Chapter 3, section “Early Toba Batak migration to Medan”.
52 See Chapter 2, section “The Toba Batak and the wider world”.
53 Tugby 1977, pp. 18ff.
At the turn of the century, many Mandailing settled on the east coast of Sumatra. In their homeland, Islamic education had become well established and a number of Muslim scholars became advisors to the sultans. A larger group became civil servants in plantation and government offices. The white-collar workers were successful in recruiting relatives and friends to the offices, and soon Mandailing civil-service dynasties were built up. In the same way as the Karo Batak who migrated to the east coast, the Mandailing were assimilated into Malay culture and the Malays accepted them as "highland Malays".

Another important ethnic group was the Minangkabau from West Sumatra. When they settled on the east coast, they became small-scale traders, merchants and artisans. The educated ones became urban professionals, such as doctors, lawyers and journalists.

Minangkabau had generally a background in Muslim reformism. This movement stressed that Islam should be rational and cleansed from traditional practices. Reason should guide the interpretation of Islam and not the authority of traditional leaders, such as sultans.

One of the key Minangkabau organisations was the Muhammadiyah. It was founded in Java in 1912 but quickly gained a strong foothold in West Sumatra. It embodied the reformist ideals. Because of Mingankabau migration, the Muhammadiyah started activities on the east coast in 1927. The organisation promoted a large number of schools. It also had a strong organisation for women and scouts. Officially the Muhammadiyah was a non-political, educational organisation, but among the Minangkabau it became a channel for nationalist aspirations.

On the east coast there were often tensions between traditionalist Malays and reformist Minangkabau. According to the Minangkabau, the Malays were superstitious, uneducated followers of many non-Islamic practices and corrupt leaders, i.e. sultans, who in an unrighteous way claimed that they had authority in religious matters. For their part, Malays charged the Minangkabau with being dishonest merchants and thieves. According to Pelly, the animosity between the two groups implied that the Minangkabau did not want to become "honorary" Malays, as did Karo Batak and Mandailing. With regard to developments from the 1920s onwards, Pelly's account appears to be correct. On the other hand, the problem is that he does not explicitly deal with when and how the first Minangkabau

---

54 Pelly 1983, pp. 68ff, 84.
55 Pelly 1983, p. 84.
57 Pelly 1983, pp. 71, 179, 201ff. In these references, Pelly refers mainly to the situation in which he conducted fieldwork in Medan, but he also makes occasional references to historical developments.
58 Reid 1979, p. 63.
59 Pelly 1983, pp. 80ff.
migrated to the region. He has very little to say about Minangkabau migration before the 1920s. Minangkabau had in fact been present in the region at least since the early 19th century.\textsuperscript{60} It is therefore possible that early Minangkabau migrants did confirm and were assimilated into Malay culture.\textsuperscript{61}

Educational alternatives

In Indonesia the Muslim educational system was traditionally concentrated in the religious schools (madrasa), where pupils were taught to read and to interpret the Koran. This system was international, in the sense that scholars were educated in and could move around between prestigious, Muslim, educational centres.

Muslim reformists opposed the traditional Muslim system, which they thought was too conservative. Instead, they wanted to integrate western subjects into the curriculum. The Muhammadiyah was one of the forerunners of reformist Muslim education and added subjects such as history and geography, alongside the religious ones.\textsuperscript{62}

With regard to state education, the Dutch colonial authorities in the last quarter of the 19th century came to the conclusion that they had almost totally neglected the education of their non-European subjects. The idea of developing "native education" was part of the ethical policy. With regard to education, policies were formulated on the basis of conditions in Java but had effects on the whole archipelago. In the outer islands, the Dutch administration had, however, to relate to the extensive educational programs of various, Christian, mission organisations.

The government in villages initiated primary schools which were designed to provide the majority of children with a rudimentary education. Children left after three years. In order to provide slightly more advanced education in Malay for a portion of the indigenous population, the government established so-called Standard Schools (Standaardschoolen). These schools provided a European education with a five-year period of study.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60} John Anderson, who in 1823 investigated conditions in the region on behalf of the British East India Company, observed that there were Minangkabau who had settled along the coast. Pelzer 1978, p. 3. Minangkabau migration had an important impact in sections of the southern part of East Sumatra during the 19th century. Reid 1979, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{61} Pelly's portrait of the Minangkabau community is coloured by his own Minangkabau reformist background, but, more importantly, by his reformist Minangkabau sources.


\textsuperscript{63} Aritonang 1994, pp. 17f.
The most advanced level of education for the indigenous population was at the Dutch schools. They provided education for a minority elite and graduates were needed mainly as lower civil servants. The number of students in this system was greatly restricted. According to the Dutch administration, the danger of expanding the Dutch educational system was that it would create a group of "half-educated natives", who would be alienated from their own culture and not qualified enough to work as civil servants. 64

The first level in the Dutch educational system was the primary school, using the Dutch language. Indigenous students were to some extent admitted to the European primary schools (Europeesche Lagere Scholen, ELS) and could later continue their education at the High School for Dutch young people (Hoogere Burger School, HBS). 65 The most important were, however, the schools that from 1914 were called Dutch Native Schools (Hollandsch Inlandsche School, HIS). Students originally graduated after five years, but in 1914 two more years were added. On this level, the main emphasis was on learning how to read and write Dutch. Graduates from HIS could continue their education at the three-year MULO School (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (More Extended Lower Education)). From the MULO, a small number continued to the highest form of education in the colony, which included the education for indigenous civil servants and doctors. 66

Although reforms were made, the educational system remained essentially the same until the end of Dutch rule. 67 In spite of its educational efforts, the Dutch administration never provided a substantial part of the population with western education. In 1930, during the high point of educational reform, only 2.8% of a population of 57 million went to primary schools, 0.14% were in the Dutch school system and at university level there were only 178 persons. 68

On the east coast of Sumatra, the sultans promoted traditional Muslim education, but the tradition in other parts of Sumatra was much stronger. The predominance of Mandailing scholars at the courts of the sultans is a case in point. Among the local population on the east coast in general, such as the Malays, the Karo- and the Simalungun Batak, education was not well developed. 69 The plan-

65 Aritonang 1994, p. 14. Aritonang does not specify on what conditions indigenous students were admitted.
67 The main problem was that pupils who left the Standaard Schools initially had no opportunity to continue the schooling, which they frequently wanted. To help frustrated students, the government in 1921 started Connecting Schools (Schakelscholen), which were intended to bridge the gap between the normal primary school and the MULO. Aritonang 1994, p. 18.
69 Reid 1978, pp. 62f, 68.
tation workers, who represented the largest group of migrants, had very rudimentary education. To educate workers and the children on plantations was not an important concern.\textsuperscript{70}

In other parts of Sumatra education, both Islamic and western, had a much stronger basis. Therefore Mandailing and Minangkabau migrants to the east coast had a clear educational advantage over the local population. The same applies to the Toba Batak, who through the mission schools had a strong tradition of education.\textsuperscript{71} These ethnic groups were also the ones who benefited most when the state and various organisations started schools in the Residency, mainly in the urban centres.

Through the Muhammadiyah, reformist Muslim ideals were in the 1930s promoted in many western-style schools, using Malay or Dutch as the language of instruction. There were also other indigenous organisations, such as Budi Utomo and Taman Siswa which provided western education.\textsuperscript{72} Christian organisations, such as the Catholic Church and the Methodist Mission, also played an important role in the development of education.\textsuperscript{73} In 1925, a Christian HIS was initiated by J. Hemmers, a member of one of the Dutch congregations in the city. The intention was to found a school that would provide good education for indigenous Christians. On the board of the school were two Toba Batak Christians and the school was inaugurated in 1928.\textsuperscript{74}

With regard to state education, there were in the early 1920s a number of HIS and HBS, two MULO schools and a training school for HIS teachers in the city where indigenous students could obtain education.\textsuperscript{75} The state sector was, however, relatively underdeveloped and the majority of the students who desired Dutch education studied at private schools.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{70} Children of plantation workers were regarded as unsuitable for education. A missionary who lived for a long time on the east coast once heard a teacher of Dutch children say that the dogs kept around the house were more capable of learning than the children of Javanese plantation workers. Alm 1953, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{71} See Chapter 2, section “Education as the main tool of progress”.

\textsuperscript{72} Reid 1979, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{73} For the educational endeavours of these organisations, see the section on the early church history of Medan.

\textsuperscript{74} Tampubolon 1937, pp. 50f.

\textsuperscript{75} These were schools where Toba studied in the 1930s. Tampubolon 1937, p. 39. For the general development of state schools in Medan and the region as a whole, see Perret 1995, pp. 208ff.

\textsuperscript{76} Reid 1978, p. 63.
Early political mobilisation

Indonesian nationalism started at the beginning of the 20th century. An increasing number of organisations were founded that articulated the conviction that the indigenous population had a common culture, language and history and should rightly be called Indonesians. This implied that they had a common interest vis-à-vis the Dutch colonial administration. The nationalist organisations in more or less explicit ways demanded that Indonesians should have more influence over the area under Dutch rule and eventually that an independent state, Indonesia, should be founded.

From the founding of the Sarekat Islam organisation in 1912, Islam became the major channel for nationalist aspirations. In 1918, the movement arrived on Sumatra, where Sarekat Islam and the socialist Insulinde led a vigorous campaign.\(^\text{77}\) In 1920, the growing Communist group within the party formed the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI). Soon they built up a large base on Java. On the east coast of Sumatra they gained support mainly from the urban workers, but the Party was also unique in that it gained support among Javanese plantation workers, as well as among Karo Batak peasants who were in conflict with the expanding plantation companies.\(^\text{78}\)

In the mid-1920s, the Communists felt that, in spite of the persecutions that they had experienced from the colonial administration, they were strong enough to attempt a revolution. In December 1925, a rebellion was proclaimed. It had its centre on Java and on the West Coast of Sumatra. At the close of 1926, it had been crushed on Java and in early 1927 the last forces were rounded up in West Sumatra.

The Communist revolt had the effect that the Dutch authorities became increasingly eager to control persons and organisations which they suspected had nationalist sympathies. On the east coast of Sumatra, a rather elaborate organisation for political control, including spies and informants, was built up. The planters organised their own intelligence organisation which effectively made political activities impossible on the estates.\(^\text{79}\) The collapse of the Communist Party also implied that Sukarno came to the forefront in the nationalist movement. He wanted to put “the Nation first” and tried to make all religious and ideological groups cooperate in gaining self-determination. In 1927, he founded the Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party, PNI) and in the same year he persuaded other parties to join him in a single alliance. One may say that these developments

\(^{77}\) Reid 1979, p. 60.  
\(^{78}\) Reid 1979, p. 60.  
\(^{79}\) Reid 1979, p. 61.
implied that an inclusive form of nationalism had taken the lead in the nationalist movement, at the expense of nationalism inspired by Communism or Islam.\textsuperscript{80}

On the east coast of Sumatra political activities were after 1927 largely limited to the urban centres. In the early 1930s, it was only Sukarno's second party, Partindo, that managed to build a strong organisation, but it was effectively crippled by the regional security organisation.\textsuperscript{81}

The leaders of the nationalist organisations on the east coast included mainly Sumatran Muslims, such as Mandailing and Minangkabau, and, to a lesser extent, Karo Batak and Javanese.\textsuperscript{82} Many of these nationalists had been educated in the schools of Muhammadiyah, Taman Siswa and Budi Utomo, organisations that took a nationalist stand, even though they remained formally non-political.\textsuperscript{83}

### Medan: A religious and ethnic microcosm

#### Administrative developments and urban growth

Medan, with its harbour Belawan, was the administrative centre of the Residency of East Sumatra, both for the plantation companies and for the Dutch colonial administration.

Upon the arrival of the first Europeans, Medan was only a small village within the Deli Sultanate, situated at the intersection of the Babura and Deli Rivers. According to Medan historians, a certain Karo Batak Guru Patimus founded Medan on the first day of July 1590.\textsuperscript{84} Because of the growth of the plantation economy, the village was quickly replaced by a thoroughly colonial city. From the turn of the century, the population of Medan grew continuously, from 14,000 in 1905 to 75,000 in 1930.\textsuperscript{85} Compared with other cities in the region, the growth of Medan was disproportionate. In 1930, its population was five times greater than that of Pematang Siantar, the second largest city.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{80} The form of nationalism that Sukarno represented is commonly described as “secular”. This label should, however, be questioned, regardless of whether it is put within brackets or not. Sukarno's outlook on life was all but secular. He was inspired by Islam, traditional Javanese mysticism, Christianity and Western spiritual movements such as Theosophy. His wish was not to separate himself from religion but to include all religions and philosophies in the nationalist struggle.

\textsuperscript{81} Reid 1979, pp. 61ff.

\textsuperscript{82} This conclusion is evident from Reid's presentation of the nationalist movement. Reid 1979, pp. 59ff.

\textsuperscript{83} Reid 1979, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{84} Pelly 1983, p. 96. For the discussion on the matter among Medan historians, see Sinar 1991, pp. 4-25, and Meuraza 1975.

\textsuperscript{85} Pelly 1983, p. 100.

\textsuperscript{86} See table in Reid 1979, p. 58.
During the first phase of Dutch colonisation the capital of the Residency of East Sumatra was Bengkalis in the Siak sultanate. The boom in the plantation economy in the north of the Residency had, however, the effect that Medan in 1887 replaced Bengkalis as capital. In 1909, Medan was awarded the status of municipality, which implied that an autonomous city administration was set up. The Municipal Council (Gemeenteraad) was the ruling body of the city. When it was introduced in 1909, the government appointed its members. They included 12 Europeans, 2 members from indigenous ethnic groups and one Chinese. From 1918, members were elected from their own ethnic constituencies, and the Council included 10 Europeans, 5 members from indigenous ethnic groups and 2 Chinese. The first Mayor of Medan was appointed the same year.

People living within the city borders of Medan were considered “government people”. They were subjects of Dutch law and paid taxes to the municipal government. Those who lived outside Medan, mainly Malay and Karo farmers, were still subject to the Sultan’s political and juridical authority. Consequently they were called “the Sultan’s people”. They had to accept the Sultan’s largely unwritten, traditional jurisdiction in religious and political matters. Occasionally they had to perform forced labour.

When the city developed, it expanded into plantation land with the consent of the Sultan of Deli, who had to accept that, owing to the dual legal system of the colony, he had no formal authority over the city. The importance of the city for the Sultan is demonstrated by the fact that in 1888 he moved his palace near Medan. The palace, Istana Maimoon, is now a main tourist attraction in central Medan.

The ethnic geography of Medan

The 1930 statistics of the ethnic composition of the population of Medan show that Medan was a microcosm of the multi-cultural society that was an important characteristic of the east coast. It was, however, a microcosm with its own features. In Medan, the Chinese represented the largest single group, which is a clear evidence of their move into the urban centres of the region. The Javanese had also migrated to Medan, but they represented a lower percentage in the city than in the region as a whole. The percentage of urban migrants from other parts of Sumatra was much smaller. One example is the Toba Batak, whose percentage of

87 Pelly 1983, p. 96.
88 Winckel 1930.
89 Pelly 1983, p. 96.
90 Pelly 1983, pp. 97f.
91 Pelly 1983, p. 83.
Table II. Ethnic groups in Medan in 1930.
Adapted from Pelly 1983, p. 73.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Indigenous” Indonesians:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>5,408</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karo Batak</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Batak, including</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simalungun Batak</td>
<td>1,189(^a)</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total “indigenous” Indonesians</strong></td>
<td>6,742</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Immigrant” Indonesians:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>19,067</td>
<td>24.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minangkabau</td>
<td>5,590</td>
<td>7.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandailing Batak</td>
<td>4,688</td>
<td>6.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundanese</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batavian</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toba Batak</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angkola Batak</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,798</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total “immigrant” Indonesians</strong></td>
<td>34,588</td>
<td>45.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Indonesian groups:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>27,287</td>
<td>35.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>4,293</td>
<td>5.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (primarily Indians)</td>
<td>3,734</td>
<td>4.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Indonesian</strong></td>
<td>35,314</td>
<td>46.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>76,584</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The figure represents “other Batak” which would include Simalungun, Pakpak Batak and, I assume, other people whose classification was uncertain.
the population in the whole region was significantly higher than in Medan. The numbers of Karo and Simalungun Batak are negligible, which is ample evidence that these groups remained farmers and had not enough educational resources to compete among the urban professionals. The Malays represented only 7% of the population, which shows that they were even more outnumbered in urban life than in the region as a whole.

Medan was a segregated city, where Europeans, Chinese, Indians and the indigenous population were assigned separate residential areas.

The European area was mainly situated between the Rivers Babura and Deli and their intersection but extended somewhat outside the limits of the rivers to the north-east. Even though there were Europeans living in the whole area, colonial villas were especially concentrated in its southern part, called Polonia. North of Polonia, administrative buildings were more frequent, such as buildings for regional and municipal administration, the regional court, police offices and consulates. There were also offices for plantation companies, the research station of the Deli Company and the centre for the branch organisations, such as the East Sumatra Association of Rubber Planters (AVROS). When the planters and other guests came to town, there were hotels for them to stay in, the best known being the Hotel Boer (the present Hotel Dharma Deli). Two Dutch Protestant Churches also built churches in the area.92

The Indian area, called Kampung Keling, was encapsulated in the western part of the European area. Many of the former plantation workers settled in the city, where they started shops or worked as manual labourers. The Indians were led by an honorary “Captain”, who represented the community in relation to the Dutch authorities.93

East of the Deli River one could find the main commercial street at the time, Kesawan.94 From the south it passed the Sultan’s palace and the adjacent Sultan’s Grand Mosque (Mesjid Raya), the Catholic church, the small Arab area and the Old Market, before reaching the City Square (Merdeka) to the north. Around the square were the Municipal Council building, some plantation offices, the railway station, the central post office and the Hotel Boer. The area around the square was in a sense the centre of Medan, as it provided services for all inhabitants, such as the postal service and the railway. On the other hand, the Merdeka was an

92 In the 1990s, many of the Dutch colonial buildings still existed and were used by the regional and local administrations, often for similar purposes as before. The old AVROS building, for instance, was used by one of the state-owned plantation companies.


94 In Medan, the main part of the road is often still called “Kesawan”, regardless of its present name, Jalan Pemuda.
extension of the European area, because of the presence of buildings connected with European administrative and commercial interests.

The Chinese part of Medan extended from the eastern bank of the Deli River, over Kesawan and the railway track into the eastern parts of the town. In this area, the Chinese ran small businesses and stores, with families living on the second floor. Bearing in mind the important role of the Chinese community in trading it was also natural that the central market should be situated in the heart of the district.

The Chinese were headed by an honorary “Major”. Because of the financial strength of the Chinese community, it was an important position. The best-known Major was Tjong Ah Fie (1860-1921). He was born in South China and came to the east coast together with his brother and became a plantation worker. The two brothers left plantation life and established themselves as successful middlemen. They became official suppliers to the plantations of essentials, such as sugar, salt and opium. They invested in Dutch companies and became the dominant owners of real estate in Medan. Trade contacts were also developed in Singapore, Malaya and China. In 1898, Tjong's brother was appointed Chinese Mayor with extensive powers in his community. In 1911 Tjong Ah Fie succeeded his brother and in this position he became the richest man in the region. The Mayor was well known for his philanthropic work. At the Chinese New Year, all the Chinese in Medan received a new set of clothes and a present. Muslims received a gift on Hari Raya, the end of the fasting month. Tjong Ah Fie also frequently donated land for churches, mosques and temples. The Mayor's house still stands on Kesawan in central Medan as a monument of colonial times.95

Around the borders of the European and Chinese areas lived the immigrant, indigenous population from various ethnic groups. Over time, these areas grew in size and came to include several areas dominated by one ethnic group. These areas are called kampung, literally meaning “village”. One of them was Kota Maksum, formally in the territory of the Sultan, where many Minangkabau started to settle in the 1920s.96 A large number of Javanese settled in the city and in Medan they became a kind of permanent underclass, doing manual and domestic labour and living on the fringes of the city.97

---

Map II. Medan, c.1940.
Ethnic change: The erosion of Malay dominance

In relation to ethnic developments in Medan, it is necessary to take into account the process of Malayisation and Pelly's concept of Malay culture being "a local dominant culture".\textsuperscript{98} It is important to bear in mind that this concept has obvious important limitations. It is not applicable to the whole population on the east coast of Sumatra during Dutch colonial times, and its character changed over time. Malay culture was certainly not a local dominant culture in relation to the European and Chinese communities. The same is true with regard to the mainly Javanese plantation workers, over whom the sultans did not have legal authority. The majority of the population was thus outside the impact of Malay culture. On the other hand, Malayisation was an important dynamic, to which local Batak groups and migrants from other parts of the archipelago had to relate.

Regarding Medan, the Sultan did not have formal authority over the people living within the city border, whatever their ethnic background. It is nevertheless apparent that in Medan there was a strong pressure on indigenous ethnic groups to become Malays during the first two or three decades of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{99} It appears that the Sultan's presence just near Medan, and the strength of the Malay community, implied that they could decide the conditions for ethnic interaction. Malay dominance certainly did not mean that migrants generally were unwilling to adapt to it, in order to fit into the new milieu. For the Mandailing Batak the process appears to have been rather easy. They were already Muslim when they arrived in the region and had only to learn to speak Malay. With regard to the Minangkabau, I have already argued that their strong assertion of ethnic identity from the 1920s onwards should not rule out the possibility of earlier assimilation in their case. Like the Mandailing Batak, they were already Muslims and should, with relative ease, have been able to adapt to a culture dominated by Malays.

In the 1920s, the ethnic landscape in Medan started to change. When the Muhammadiyah arrived in the region in 1927, it became an important organisation of the Minangkabau and a means whereby they could assert their separate ethnic identity. Even though Kota Maksum, the main Minangkabau residential area, was in the Sultan's territory, it appears that he could not impose his will on the reformist Minangkabau.

Regarding the various Batak groups in Medan, they began to assert their identity in the early 1920s, when they were drawn into the pan-Batak movement. Contrary to the very negative stereotype of the Batak on the east coast, Batak

\textsuperscript{98} Pelly 1983, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{99} See Chapter 3, section "Not disclosing one's identity".
from all groups “came out” in cities such as Medan and Jakarta and asserted their Batak identity. People from other ethnic groups were often surprised to find that persons whom they knew as orderly and intelligent were in fact Batak. Books in Batak dialects were published and various organisations that included both Muslim and Christian Batak were set up. In Medan, a Batak football club called Batak Sport was founded in 1921. The movement originated in the cities, where Batak represented a small minority, but these sentiments also spread into North and South Tapanuli.

Mandailing participation in the movement was withdrawn in 1922 as a result of the so-called Sei Mati affair. This affair evolved around a burial ground in the area of Sei Mati in the south-eastern part of the city that Muslims from South Tapanuli had used since 1889. In 1922, a group among the Mandailing started to refuse burials to anyone who called him- or herself Batak. The Mandailing had successfully adapted to Malay culture and did not want to be associated with “the primitive Batak”. The other group included mainly South Tapanuli Muslims from the Sipirok area. They regarded themselves simultaneously as good Muslims and proud Batak. When they were denied access to the burial ground, they became furious and appealed to the Dutch authorities to rule against the other group. In the end, the “Batak” party won the legal process. But by then the Batak Muslim community was split between the majority who refused to call themselves Batak and those who were proud to do so. Even though the Sei Mati affair was a conflict among Muslim Batak, the increasing migration of Toba Batak to Medan implied that the “non-Batak” group among the Mandailing felt the need even more to distance themselves from the Toba.

After the Sei Mati affair, tensions continued to plague the pan-Batak organisations. In 1924, Batak Sport, for instance, was split between Christians and Muslims. It is likely that Muslims who agreed to be called Batak did not want to be part of an organisation more and more dominated by Toba Batak Christians.

The above-mentioned developments imply that the Malay community from the early 1920s started to lose its ability to make other groups conform to their

---

100 Castles 1972, pp. 181ff.
101 Tampubolon 1937, p. 44.
102 For some examples, see Castles 1972, pp. 183ff.
103 The Mandailing leader Mangaraja Ihutan wrote a contemporary report on the Sei Mati affair, Mangaraja Ihutan 1926, while scholarly analyses will be found in Castles 1972, pp. 186ff, and Pelly 1983, pp. 86ff. The role of the Toba in the Batak revival and its disintegration will be discussed in Chapter 4.
104 Tampubolon 1937, p. 44. Tampubolon does not say explicitly that it took place in 1924, but this is likely to have been the case, because the paragraph about this development is placed just before a paragraph dealing with the 12½-years jubilee of the congregation that year.
culture and to give up their previous ethnic identities. Instead, Medan was becoming a more multi-ethnic environment, where it was easier for groups among the indigenous population to assert themselves.

What then became of the Malays? Until the end of the Dutch colonial period, the Sultan of Deli was certainly a power to be reckoned with, but the Malays became a power group among others. When they had lost their ability to assimilate other groups, they stressed their own distinctiveness. They claimed that they were the true, original inhabitants of the east coast and that others had intruded into their fatherland. This kind of mentality would in the late 1930s give rise to political organisations which worked for the specific interests of the “original inhabitants” (bumiputera) and which tried to gain support also in the Simalungun and Karo communities.105

Even though ethnic diversity was becoming an important reality in Medan, there was also among the indigenous urban population a sense of having a common identity. In contrast to the plantation workers, these migrants had a much stronger impact on society and politics. On the whole, they felt themselves free from adat and traditional authorities such as raja and Malay sultans. They developed an urban “superculture”. According to Reid, Medan was in the 1930s in some respects “the most ‘Indonesian’ city in the colony”, where Malay, the basis for the future Indonesian language, had a dominating influence. A vigorous, Malay-language press evolved that put the city in touch with the developments in other parts of the archipelago. In these developments Sumatran Muslims, mainly Minangkabau and Mandailing, played an important role.106

There was also another unifying factor, i.e. Islam. Muslims represented a very large majority of the indigenous population in Medan, even though the prevailing ethnic factor had the effect that there was no unified Muslim “block” in the city. The conflict between traditionalist Malays and modernist Minangkabau is a case in point. Islam was, however, the more general identity of these ethnic groups, an identity that could be mobilised in the face of the migration of indigenous, non-Muslim groups into the city. The main example of such groups is the Christian Toba Batak, to which the remaining chapters of this study will be devoted.

The early Church history of Medan

The arrival of Europeans in East Sumatra had the consequence that Church organisations were established with the purpose of caring for the religious needs of

105 Reid 1978, pp. 68.
planters and colonial administrators. Europeans were generally not very interested and Christian ministers often complained that the accumulation of profits was their main preoccupation, not spiritual life.  

There was also a number of non-European Christians who lived in Medan. Some of them were affiliated to congregations dominated by Europeans, while others were members of congregations set up by western missionary bodies. In general, the Dutch authorities adhered to the so-called comity policy which regulated western missionary work. The policy implied that one mission organisation obtained the exclusive right to pursue missionary activities in a specific area. Cities were, however, generally outside comity agreements and in Medan missionary organisations could establish themselves without taking comity agreements into account.

The Catholic Church was the first denomination to start congregational work for Europeans in Medan. In the Dutch East Indies the Catholic Church was from 1807 organised by the Apostolic Prefecture of Batavia. In 1842, it was converted into the Apostolic Vicariate of Batavia with an appointed bishop. In the eastern part of the Dutch colony, there were old, indigenous Catholic communities that had existed from the time of the Jesuit mission in the 16th century, but at the beginning of the 19th century there were no Catholic communities in Sumatra. The establishment of the Catholic Church in Sumatra was linked to the establishment of Dutch military posts on the island. These posts eventually developed into cities, in which Dutch military personnel and civil servants founded Catholic congregations. The most important was Padang, the main Dutch centre during the Padri War. In Padang, a Catholic congregation was formed in 1830, and a priest was stationed there in 1837. Dutch military personnel and civil servants dominated the congregation, but among its members were also smaller groups of Chinese and Eurasians.

In Medan, a Catholic congregation was founded in 1878 and a church built on Paleisweg (now Jalan Pemuda) in 1879. The church was situated east of the Deli River near the boundary of the European settlement. In 1912, the congregation had about 60 European members.

During the early years of the 20th century, the Catholic Church in the archipelago was divided into different apostolic prefectures, each served by one religious order. Dutch Capuchins, an independent branch of the Franciscan order, ac-

---

111 Kroniek van de Parochie Medan, p. 1. ACH.
112 Muskens 1980, p. 46.
cepted responsibility for the Apostolic Prefecture of Borneo, established in 1905 and the Apostolic Prefecture of Sumatra, established in 1911. The Apostolic Prefect of Sumatra resided in Padang, while several Capuchins were stationed in Medan. In Medan, they initiated active work among Indians and Chinese.

A few hundred Indian Catholics had come from one of the French enclaves in India to work on one of the French-owned plantations. In Medan the Catholic Church built a school and a small church in Kampung Keling. Regarding the Chinese community, the Church in the mid-1920s initiated the English Catholic School on Hakkastraat near the central market, followed by a HIS for mainly Chinese children in 1927. In 1936, these schools had 600 pupils. The Chinese Catholic community was much smaller, about 300 individuals. At first they joined the European service, but later they held separate services in English or Chinese. In 1934, a Chinese Catholic church was built on Hakkastraat.

The main Protestant Church in Medan was the Protestantsche Kerk. It was the unitary Protestant Church in the colony, with intimate ties with the colonial administration. In Medan their church was built in 1888, probably near the Merdeka. In 1921, a new church was inaugurated on Mangalaan (the present Jalan Diponegoro) in the centre of the European district. The clergy of the Protestantsche Kerk generally stayed 2-3 years each in Medan. The position as minister in Medan was probably not prestigious and was seen as a step to other assignments.

The Protestantsche Kerk had many indigenous Christians as members in the eastern parts of the colony. The Church also assumed some responsibility towards indigenous Protestants in general. One example is the Depok seminary, near Jakarta, to which indigenous teachers were sent by missionary organisations active mainly outside Java.
During the second decade of the 20th century, about 80-100 members of the Protestantsche Kerk migrated from Ambon and Menado to Medan. The men worked as government employees. Both these ethnic groups generally provided a large proportion of the indigenous military personnel and police officers in the colony. The migration of these groups was probably the reason why the congregation in 1911 decided to open the main service in the church to indigenous Christians generally.

In 1918 and 1919, the Protestantsche Kerk in Medan suffered several crises. From April 1918 to the beginning of 1919, the congregation was without a minister. It was, however, not long before the new minister, the Rev. Langen, went on leave to the Netherlands and resigned from his position. As a consequence, the congregation was without clergy for four months.

Simultaneously with these events, a group of Dutch Christians initiated a new congregation, a congregation of the Gereformeerde Kerken. The Church was founded in 1886 in the Netherlands in opposition to the theological liberalism of the Hervormde Kerk. Instead, it stressed traditional Reformed doctrines.

The Gereformeerde congregation in Medan was rather small. When it was founded, there were not more than 100 active members of the Church on the east coast of Sumatra and in 1934 members numbered little more than 300. In spite of not there being a large congregation, the members soon managed to build their own church in the European area, on Residentsweg (the present Jalan H Z Arifin) near Kampung Keling. They also recruited a minister from the Netherlands.

The congregation had several members among the prominent Dutch citizens in Medan, who were known for their Christian engagement. One of them was A.
A. L. Rutgers. During the period 1916-23, he was director of the research station of the AVROS. He was later to embark on a successful administrative and political career.

The activities of the Gereformeerde Kerken for members abroad was called "works for the scattered" (verstrooide werken). The members in North Sumatra regarded themselves as a group of "scattered" members of their home church, and once a year arranged a "day for the scattered" (verstrooide dagen).

In the society of the east coast, some members of this Church accepted "ethical" ideals, corresponding to the ethical policy. The best-known individual to represent these two ideals is J. van den Brand, the well-known critic of the exploitation of plantation workers during the early 20th century. During the early part of the century, he was a member of the Gereformeerde congregation on the island of Kwitang and he was later active in the congregation in Medan. On at least one occasion, he gave a speech about the treatment of plantation workers at a church meeting in Jakarta.

The Gereformeerde congregation had contacts with indigenous Christians. In central Java, the Church had been active in mission work since the late 19th century. It was based on the conviction that the Church, as such, had to pursue mission work. In Sumatra, the congregation in Medan in the early 1930s made efforts to work among Javanese plantation workers, some of whom had had contacts with the mission on Java. To this end, a Javanese teacher was employed and a small centre, including a small church, was built on Percutweg (the present Jalan H.O.S. Cokroaminoto) east of the Chinese area. By the end of 1936, the

---

126 Algra n.d., p. 94.
127 After his years in Medan, A. A. L. Rutgers (1884-1966) became a high colonial officer in Bogor/Buitenzorg. In 1928, he was appointed Governor of Surinam. In the 1930s, he returned to the Netherlands and became a prominent politician for the conservative, Anti-revolutionary Party. In 1936, he was elected a member of the National Council (Raad van State), a high administrative and juridical body of the State. In 1959, he became its vice-president. He was active as a lay preacher in the Gereformeerde Kerken, involved in the Dutch Student Christian Movement and a board member of a mission working in Surinam (Zeister Zending Genootschap). Chavité 1989, p. 505.
128 The RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar, for instance, attended the verstrooide dagen in 1922. Lotz, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1922. BM 2.867. VEM.
130 Algra n.d., p. 91.
131 In 1928, the congregation was approached by a representative of Javanese Christian plantation workers. C. Mak, Generale Synode der Geref. Kerken, Medan 8 April 1930. R 73 S 54 U 4b. RU. Verslag van het zendingswerk onder Javane over het jaar 1933. DVG: Medan. AGK. In 1930 the appeal of the congregation for financial support for mission work among the Javanese was turned down by the central mission board. C. Mak, Jaarverslag Gereformeerde Kerk Medan. 1930. DVG: Medan. AGK. But in 1932, the congregation was supported in starting the mission. C. Mak to Generale Deputaten, Medan 12 June 1936. DVG: Medan. AGK.
congregation numbered 212 Christians, 57 of whom lived in Medan. The Christian concern was occasionally extended to all plantation workers. Efforts to make the life of plantation workers more humane included a campaign to enforce Sunday as the day off, which was thought to be a relief for the workers.

The Methodist mission was the most important missionary organisation in Medan during the first few decades of the century. The United Methodist missionaries from the USA had in 1855 established themselves in Malaya and Singapore. On account of shortage of funds, they did not start to work in the Dutch colony until the early 20th century. They were then invited by Chinese who wanted English teachers for their Anglo-Chinese schools. As a consequence, Methodist teachers and eventually missionaries came to work in Java, Borneo and Sumatra.

In Medan, Methodism was established on the initiative of the Chinese businessman Hong Teen. He had studied at the Anglo-Chinese School in Penang, a city on the coast on the other side of the Straits of Malacca, and had a favourable opinion of Methodist teachers. About to start his own Anglo-Chinese school, he invited his old teacher, the missionary Pykett, to discuss plans for co-operation. The Chinese initiative is apparent from the fact that Hong Teen was anxious to pay Pykett's expenses. A Methodist school was started and led first by Pykett and later by the Indian Methodist, Solomon Pakianathan. The school functioned under Methodist auspices until 1909.

In 1910, two Chinese businessmen and Methodist lay preachers from Singapore opened a chapel and a school, called the English Public School, in their shop on Kapiteinsweg (the present Jalan Singamangaradja) in the south-western part of the Chinese district. Even though the small congregation had mainly Chinese members, services were held in both Chinese and Malay. The use of Malay reflects the contacts of the Chinese community with Malaya and Singapore. These contacts were mainly commercial but could in this case be combined with contacts with the mission organisations active there.

In 1912, the first Western Methodist missionary was stationed in Medan and in 1915, the school was renamed the American Methodist School. At the time, the school had 100 pupils, and in 1921, the numbers reached a peak of 450. In 1920,
it moved to Hakkastraat in the Chinese area of Medan. The school was divided between the Methodist Boys School and the Methodist Girls School in 1922.\(^\text{139}\)

From 1915, the Methodist mission expanded outside Medan, mainly by building schools, as a result of the Dutch authorities allowing them to pursue mission work on the east coast.\(^\text{140}\)

Another missionary organisation in Medan was the Adventists. During the first few years of the 20th century, the American missionary Munson tried to establish a mission in Sumatra. In 1901, he visited Medan, where he planned to start a school for Chinese, and in 1904 he was present in Padang. But it was not until 1916 that more stable Adventist activities began in Medan, when two American missionaries started a school on Julianastraat (the present Jalan Asia) in the southern part of the Chinese area. As in other Adventist schools, the language of instruction was English, which was definitely one main reason why people enrolled.\(^\text{141}\) Presumably it was initially Chinese who were reached by these activities. In the 1920s, Adventists were attempting to build a church, but it is uncertain whether the effort was successful.\(^\text{142}\) The parallels with the Methodist mission are apparent. Both originated in the USA, initially attempted to reach the Chinese community and used schools as the main means of doing so.

\(^{139}\) Gould 1961, pp. 121ff.

\(^{140}\) In 1941, there were 26 Methodist schools in East Sumatra. Daulay 1995, p. 213. Gould 1961, pp. 121ff.

\(^{141}\) Gould 1961, pp. 119f.

\(^{142}\) Their plans to build a church are noted in RMG sources, Lotz, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1924. BM: 2.867. VEM.
CHAPTER 2

Christian Mission and Toba Batak
Ethno-religious Identity

Introduction

This chapter will serve two functions. The first is to provide the necessary framework for the remainder of the study. It will deal with the three elements: Toba society and culture, Dutch colonisation of the heartland of the Batak groups and the establishment of the Rhenish mission among the Toba. The last part is the major one. My basic view is that the actual development of the mission was a complex interplay between missionary theory in Germany, the activities and convictions of the missionaries "in the field" and the Toba themselves. The latter took part actively in the work of the mission and appropriated Christianity into their world-view. The limiting date of this part is 1930, when the Rhenish mission instituted an autonomous Batak Church. Specific developments in the period 1930-1942 will be integrated into Chapter 5.

My main focus is on the Toba Batak, who were the dominant group among the Christian converts. But to place the emphasis solely on them in this section would be to leave out the other Batak groups among which the RMG worked, i.e. the Angkola, Pakpak and Simalungun Batak groups. To do so would not do justice to the perceptions of the RMG missionaries. They thought that their mission was in principle directed to all Batak groups. The general term "Batak" will therefore be used in discussions about missionary ideals and strategy, while the examples of Batak participation in the mission will be taken exclusively from the Toba group.

In the discussion about the theology of mission, both in Germany and on Sumatra, I shall oscillate between the terms "missionary ideals" and "missionary strategy". The reason is that the ideals in this context were intimately connected with a missionary strategy.

The second function of the chapter is to analyse the development of a Toba ethno-religious identity in North Tapanuli. The issue of when and how Toba ethnic and religious identities were formed and related to each other have been
almost entirely ignored in previous research. The concluding section of the chapter will be an explicit discussion of this problem, but it will bring in many of the issues highlighted earlier. I shall propose a framework within which Toba identity formation can be understood and which includes the role of the RMG mission. My main thesis is that Christian mission was the main agent when a distinct Toba ethno-religious identity was formed. Furthermore, I stress that this identity was rooted in a specific milieu, namely Toba society in colonial North Tapanuli. The discussion thus serves as a springboard to the next chapter, which deals with the transformation of this identity in the process of migration to Medan.

Toba Batak culture and traditional society

Toba Batak is the largest of the Batak ethnic groups that have traditionally lived in North Sumatra. Anthropologists usually refer to six Batak groups: Mandailing and Angkola Batak in South Tapanuli, Toba and Pakpak Batak in North Tapanuli and Simalungun and Karo Batak to the east and north-east of North Tapanuli. Today, all these areas are part of the Indonesian province of North Sumatra.

The Batak groups share certain cultural traits, such as the division of the population into clans, but there are also large differences between the groups. From the linguistic point of view, the groups in South Tapanuli and the Toba must be sharply distinguished from the Pakpak and the Karo. The Simalungun language is intermediate.¹

The Toba have traditionally inhabited the interior highlands of Sumatra, around Lake Toba. The area consists of a highland plateau with the lake, originally a large volcanic crater, as its main topographic feature. The Toba inhabit the slopes, plains and mountains around the western, southern and eastern parts of the lake, including the large inland island of Samosir. Two other important concentrations of Toba are to be found in the highland area of Humbang south-west of the lake and further south in the Silindung Valley. Because of the climate and the soils, the Toba have developed into highly skilled, wet-rice cultivators and have built large terraced fields that cover large parts of the area.

The most fundamental value in Toba Batak culture is the following of adat, a term used all over Indonesia. In the broadest sense, adat refers to everything in nature that is following its own particular course. In the human social world, adat refers to anything that takes place according to custom. Adat has a divine origin and is a set of norms inherited from the ancestors. As the guardians of adat, they

¹ Castles 1972, p. 3.
reward those who fulfil adat and punish those who do not. Adat is codified in the oral tradition by means of sayings (umpama). Such sayings have a power in themselves which secures that adat is not transgressed.

The foundation of the Toba social system is the marga (clan). Traditionally, villages were dominated by the clan whose ancestor was said to have founded the village. The clans are organised in a patrilineal, exogamous, social system, in which all clans are related in a large clan-tree. They are grouped according to a time axis, which goes back through the common male ancestors and begins with the mythical ancestor of all Batak groups, Si Raja Batak. Clans belong to the larger Sumba moiety or the smaller Lontung. Many Toba generally have a good knowledge of at least their main genealogical structure, and many have an extended knowledge of relations many generations back. Since the place in the genealogical tree also determines social relations, two Toba who meet for the first time often try to establish in what way and how closely they are related.

The connecting link between clans is the woman. Upon marriage, her clan is compensated with a marriage payment from the marga of her husband. Traditionally, the married woman lives with her husband among his clansmen, but she does not take over his clan name, remaining instead a member of her father’s clan. She therefore plays an important role as mediator between the clans of her husband and her father. In the family, a woman is thus referred to as the “daughter” (boru) of her father’s clan, for instance, boru Lumbanggaol. Otherwise, she is referred to by her husband’s clan and the clan of her father, for instance, Hutabarat boru Lumbanggaol. Thus, her name in itself is evidence of her role as a mediator between male clans.

Toba society was and to a large extent still is strongly patriarchal. In traditional society the position of women was often precarious. A woman who had given her husband many sons and at least one daughter would be highly respected, but a woman who did not bear sons was despised. Since the clan system was built around men, a man without sons could not perpetuate the clan. Such a state was

---

2 Shreiner 1972, pp. 86ff. Vergouwen 1964, pp. 83ff. Dutch colonial authorities regarded adat primarily as the basis for the indigenous legal system. Therefore adat is often translated as “customary law”, which limits its original broad meaning. Vergouwen 1964, a work originally published in Dutch in 1933 and based on the author’s experiences as a colonial officer in the 1920s, is a classic example of this approach. It is the standard ethnographic account of the Toba. For a discussion of the relations between adat and the colonial legal system, see Shreiner 1972, pp. 89ff.

3 For a discussion of Umpama and adat, see Vergouwen 1964, pp. 137ff, and of the efficacy of speech, see Vergouwen 1964, pp. 95ff.

4 For a description of the marga system, see Vergouwen 1964, pp. 6-29.

5 The details of marriage payment are discussed in Vergouwen 1964, pp. 171ff.

6 The basic perspective is Vergouwen’s, Vergouwen 1964, pp. 44, 157, but van Bemmelen provides a concentrated discussion of the subject, Bemmelen 1992.
considered a great shame and the man was urged to take another wife, sometimes after having divorced the first. However, the need to have sons of his own was not the only reason for a man to take another wife. Children brought prestige to the clan, and men who had acquired wealth often took more than one wife. Important chiefs (raja) had many.7

Because clans are exogamous, marriage between people of the same clan is taboo. Sexual relations between members of the same clan are in principle regarded as incestuous.8 A young man once told me that in relation to girls there would always be some tension, except with a girl of the same clan, with whom he could be very relaxed and regard her in the same way as he would his sisters.

Toba adat encouraged marriage soon after puberty, and to marry was, especially for men, regarded as a duty.9 Most marriages were arranged, but those who were about to get married often had some say in the choice of a spouse.10 If a couple did not obtain the blessing of their parents, the only alternative to accepting their fate was to elope.11

The ideal marriage pattern was a marriage between maternal cross-cousins, i.e. when a man marries the daughter of his mother's brother. In this way the relationship between two clans, at least in former times, tended to be perpetuated. It was, however, possible to disregard the ideal, but only after the parents of the cousin had been compensated for the "loss" resulting from the fact that the man did not marry their daughter. It would be in the form of a special gift.12 The ritual was performed if the family wanted to establish new relations with another clan that was thought to be more suitable. The system was, in other words, dynamic and marriage alliances were considered a means of increasing social status.13

8 Vergouwen 1964, pp. 158f.
9 Many Toba married when they were only 15-16 years old. Hutauruk 1984, p. 154. It was considered a shame if a man does not marry, because his branch of the clan would not live on. According to Vergouwen "Marriage is exclusively patrilineal in purge. Its object is to perpetuate the lineage of the man in the male line." Vergouwen 1964, p. 156. Women were certainly also urged to marry, but it was not thought to be as structurally important.
10 Van Bemmelen argues that, even when marriages were arranged, the young woman had to give active support to the arrangement. Bemmelen 1992, p. 140. Vergouwen paints a rather idyllic picture of the young man, who in his quest for a bride is rather free, although his parents will also direct him to approach a certain suitable girl. If the young man approaches a girl, her consent is needed before marriage. Vergouwen 1964, pp. 166ff.
11 Vergouwen 1964, pp. 157, 214f.
13 The business-like aspect of marriage is well known. See, for instance, Vergouwen 1964, p. 171, on marriage payment, and Bemmelen 1992, p. 143, on marriage as the main means of increasing social status.
The clan system is hierarchical, in the sense that the clan (hula-hula) that has sent its daughters to marry into another clan is regarded as superior to the other clan (boru). On the other hand, the superior clan is also related to clans that have sent their daughters to them, clans that they regard as superior. The three marga, one’s own (dongan sabutuba, lit. “friends from one womb”), the hula-hula and the boru, are called dalihan na tolu (lit. “three stones”), which refers to the three stones put under the cooking-pot. Without one of the stones, the pot would fall. In this system, no one is on top, since everyone has relations with a clan that they regard as superior.14

Toba traditional religion includes the belief in a superior deity called Mula jadi na Bolon, “the Great Beginner”, who created heaven, earth and the underworld. Under him are three subordinate gods, Batara Guru, Soripada and Mangala Bulan.15 On the other hand, daily religious life centres on the spirits of the ancestors and how to please them. The ancestors, primarily male, continue to influence the lives of the living. They must be cared for with, for example, offerings and sacrifices in order to make them give blessings instead of causing harm. Large-scale rituals were performed by the bius, a large sacrificial community comprising several villages. Sacrifices were accompanied by ritual music (gondang).16

Since the constitutive principle of a human being (tondi) continues to exist after death, burials are very important. They signify the beginning of the journey of the tondi to the land of the dead. On these occasions, the right representatives from the three clans in the dalihan na tolu have to be present and the correct rites must be performed. After the burial, the body lies in the ground for 1-2 years. After this period, the bones are dug up, cleaned and put into a charnel house, often situated in a field.17

Sabala is a manifestation of the tondi in this life. It refers to a concrete power belonging to important and powerful individuals, such as chiefs (raja), traditional religious officials (datu), and members of the hula-hula in relation to the boru. The main sign of having great sabala was worldly success, i.e. large and fruitful fields, many cattle and a lot of children. Sabala was a quality that could be gained or lost. Items belonging to important persons, for instance, were said to transmit sabala.18

---

14 Although he does not use the term dalihan na tolu in this context, Vergouwen provides the classic discussion of the subject, see Vergouwen 1964, pp. 44-65.
15 For a discussion of the Toba conception of God with references to earlier works, see Sinaga 1981. The names and characters of these gods display a strong influence of Shivaism. Parkin 1978, pp. 152-184.
16 Warneck 1909, pp. 67ff, 95ff.
The Toba often summarise the central values of their culture in three words, harajaon (kingdom), hamoraon (wealth) and hasangapon (prestige).\textsuperscript{19}

Harajaon implies that the goal of every man is to establish himself independently and manage his own life. One of the main goals in pre-colonial and colonial times was to become a raja (chief) in one’s own village.\textsuperscript{20} The Toba themselves often say, “every Batak (man) wants to be a raja”. Therefore, it is important to establish one’s own household (manjae), because this is the beginning of his efforts to build his own kingdom. Since the man has to respect his relatives and the clans to which he is related, his independence is certainly relative but nevertheless real.\textsuperscript{21} The ideal of harajaon was conditioned by a lack of central authority before the arrival of missionaries and colonial administrators.

Hamoraon implies that the goal in life is to prosper. Prosperity was traditionally considered the same as having many wives and children, large fields and many cattle and pigs. It was regarded as the outcome of possessing sabala. Hasangapon is the goal of the efforts to realise the ideals of harajaon and hamoraon. The striving for hasangapon has been described as “the fundamental political motivation of the Batak ...”.\textsuperscript{22}

These ideals are individual qualities that people, mainly men, possess, but they are also shared with others. A man who is wealthy and successful thus brings prestige to the whole marga. A woman who bears many sons brings wealth and prestige to her husband, while her prestige benefits from the harajaon efforts of her spouse.

Pre-colonial Toba society was virtually stateless. The basic political organisation consisted of small villages, often comprising only about 35 individuals.\textsuperscript{23} Villages were ruled by raja (chiefs) who were virtually independent, although they were part of a complex network with other villages based on marga relations and membership in larger, sacrificial communities (bius).\textsuperscript{24} The bius usually consisted of a number of villages, although there were larger bius in South Samosir and the Uluan region east of Lake Toba.\textsuperscript{25} In the 1930s, the villages and raja numbered

\textsuperscript{19} I have heard other versions of this formula, but this one appears to be the most common.

\textsuperscript{20} Castles devotes a whole chapter to the struggle for harajaon during colonial times. Castles 1972, pp. 202-226.

\textsuperscript{21} For a discussion of the concept of manjae in relation to setting up a new household, see Vergouwen 1964, pp. 217ff.


\textsuperscript{23} This was the average size of the villages on the island of Samosir.

\textsuperscript{24} Castles 1972, pp. 7f, 12.

\textsuperscript{25} Castles 1975, p. 69.
about 8,000. One may compare these conditions with those in South Tapanuli, where villages were much larger and raja more powerful.

The fields were formally owned by the marga and could not be sold to strangers. On the other hand, every family had its own piece of land. That piece of land could be inherited or sold within the village. Women were relied on as the main workforce in the fields.

The system of dalihan na tolu prevented the formation of distinct social classes. There was always a bula-bula (wife-giving group) that was to be served and respected. Toba society therefore had strong egalitarian features, compared with, for instance, society on Java. This characteristic does not imply that Toba society was free from hierarchy and subjugation. Women in general held a subordinate position. Interest rates were high and those who could not pay their debts could become slaves. The proportion of slaves was, however, not very large, not higher than 3% of the population. In contrast, it has been estimated that one-third of the population in South Tapanuli were slaves.

The only political leader above the village level was Singamangaraja. The last of the dynasty, Ompu Polubatu, who was killed by Dutch troops in 1907, was said to be the twelfth representative of the line. His headquarters was in Bakkara in the south-western corner of Lake Toba. The dynasty was an imitation of the priest-kings of Indianised Southeast Asia. Singamangaraja could command the Toba in war and was the highest religious official of the Sumba moiety, the smaller Lontung moiety had its own religious leader. His sahala was said to be greater than any other human being. To him, miracles were attributed and he was generally regarded as invulnerable. But one must take into account that his political authority was limited and did not change the almost total independence of the raja.

Conflict was and still is an integral part of Toba society. Outsiders often claim that the Toba more than any other ethnic group are prone to conflict. The
Toba themselves frequently accept this attribute.\textsuperscript{36} Even though adat was regarded as unchangeable, its interpretation in concrete cases often caused disputes. Without any authority above the village level, quarrels would lead to small wars between villages. Wars were, however, subject to many rules and generally few people were killed.\textsuperscript{37} Parts of the bodies of dead enemies were eaten to take over their strength. This custom for centuries earned the Batak generally the reputation of being cannibals.\textsuperscript{38}

In their struggle for *harajaon, hamoraon* and *hasangapon*, tensions would frequently appear between brothers, *marga* branches and villages. In these cases, a person with high status would try to mediate, but if these efforts were not successful, one group might set off to found a new village.\textsuperscript{39}

**The Toba Batak and the wider world**

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Toba had relatively little contact with the outside world. Some trade with other ethnic groups occurred. The main example is the barter trade in the towns on the west coast, Sibolga and Baros. Here, the Toba population in the interior traded camphor, incense and gutta-percha in exchange for salt, tobacco and fish.\textsuperscript{40} Baros harboured a Tamil merchant guild in the 11th century. North of the city, ruins remain that may be the remains of a Nestorian church, and Arab sources from the 7th century mention the presence

\textsuperscript{36} Dutch colonial administrators often stressed that the Toba were notoriously quarrelsome. A lower Dutch official (controleur) who was handling Toba complaints and cases once wrote that “Gross egoism, megalomania (*eigenwaan*), thirst for *rajja-ship* and mutual feuds, which they never abandon, dominate their lives.” Castles 1972, p. 56. Other ethnic groups, such as those on Java, who value a “civilised” and indirect way of approaching conflict, regard the Toba as being too direct and blunt in stating their case. See Bruner 1973 for a discussion of this kind of interaction. In relation to a conflict in a Toba congregation in Medan in the 1990s, a Toba exclaimed that “... the Batak are difficult to invite to dinner but if someone invites to a conflict, everyone joins in spontaneously” (“... orang Batak sulit diajak makan, tapi kalau diajak berkelahi, spontanitas terus mau ...”) Sejarah Gereja HKI Teladan 1992, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{37} Castles 1972, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{38} Perret 1995, pp. 25ff. In Johannes Warneck’s work, cannibalism is an often highlighted and abhorrent feature of Toba society that contrasts with the glory of the Christian Gospel. For one example, see Warneck 1925, pp. 138ff. For an assessment of the phenomenon as an important part of traditional religious customs, see Leertouwer 1971. For a critical perspective on cannibalism as a colonial myth, see Arens 1979, and for an example from Kongo of false rumours of anthropophagy, see Axelsson 1970, pp. 179ff.


\textsuperscript{40} Warneck 1925, p. 18. Concerning the relations between these coastal areas and the Toba in the interior highlands, see Drakard 1990, for instance, pp. 14ff and 33f.
of churches in a place that may have been Baros. This may be the first example of a Christian presence in the region.

Little is known about early contacts with major states in the region. There are, however, clear signs of a strong cultural impact from the Indianised states that were established in the archipelago before the arrival of Islam from the 11th century onwards. Indian culture was also transmitted through Baros. To this influence testify the many Sanskrit loan-words in the Toba Batak language, Indian traits in traditional religious beliefs, and an Indian version of chess played before the arrival of the Europeans. The Indian cultural traits were by the 19th century thoroughly integrated into Toba culture.

In 1539, troops from Aceh are believed to have attacked the Toba, when they refused to be converted to Islam. Although some tributes were paid, Aceh was unable to establish its dominance in the area. The Padri War of the early 19th century spilled over into the southern part of the Toba area. Sometime between 1825 and 1835 a Padri band entered the region. They probably penetrated as far as the Humbang area south-west of Lake Toba and are believed to have killed one of the Singamangarajah dynasty. The result of the Padri intrusion was a chain-reaction of lawlessness and demoralisation, in which raja engaged in a fierce struggle for power. The Padri wars, in other words, caused some internal disruption in Toba society, but after that no outside power had a significant impact until the arrival of missionaries and colonial administrators 30 years later.

European colonisation of the southern Batak groups, i.e. the Angkola and Mandailing, began in the 1830s as a result of the Padri War. The area was administered from Padang and included in the residency of West Sumatra. The Dutch administration promoted the forced cultivation of cash crops (cultuurstelsel), roads were built and western-style schools were opened. The main raja were given influence within the new structure. They were, for example, put in charge of mobilising labour for the plantations in return for a share in the profits. Some raja even considered themselves allies, rather than subjects, of the Dutch. A similar system to the one in East Sumatra was built up, but on a smaller and more decentralised scale.

Parallel to the Dutch political expansion, Islam became an important factor in the region. During the Padri War, South Tapanuli was raided by Islamic troops.

42 For a comprehensive discussion of the Indian impact on Toba culture, see Parkin 1978. Toba traditional chess is discussed in Oefele 1904.
44 Castles 1975, p. 72.
45 Quotation from Castles 1972, p. 17.
46 Castles 1972, pp. 21ff.
but the disintegration of traditional society nevertheless resulted in Islam gaining prestige. Therefore people responded quickly to the call from Muslim missionaries from the south and a majority converted to Islam. The result of colonisation and Islamisation was that by the mid-1800s Angkola and Mandailing societies had experienced a thoroughgoing transformation.47

Dutch expansion north of the Mandailing and Angkola Batak groups occurred significantly later. Even though the Governor of West Sumatra visited the Silindung Valley in 1868, it was incorporated in the Dutch colony only in 1878. At that time, missionaries from the German Rhenish mission had worked in the valley since 1864. Dutch troops were deployed in the area around Lake Toba in 1883, while Samosir Island, the Uluan area east of Lake Toba and the Pakpak Batak area further north remained independent.48 These areas were gradually brought under Dutch control, the Pakpak area being the last. It was annexed only during the second decade of the 20th century.49

The main opponent of the new colonial order was Singamangaraja XII. He and his supporters opposed the penetration of colonial officers and missionaries into North Tapanuli. In 1878, Dutch troops were stationed in Silindung after a request from the missionaries and Toba Christians who felt threatened by the “priest-king”. The activities of Singamangaraja then became limited to the Toba area, but in 1883 Dutch troops were stationed there as well. The Batak political leader could occasionally drive missionaries away from their posts and confront Dutch troops. There were also rumours in the community that Singamangaraja had recruited invulnerable warriors from Aceh, who would help him to drive out the Europeans.50 But in the long run he did not represent a serious threat to the establishment of Dutch hegemony. In 1903 he is reported to have told Toba Christians that he was willing to accept to co-operation with the Dutch if he was recognised as the main Toba political leader.51 The seriousness of this initiative is not known, but it did not change the antagonistic relations between him and the Dutch. After some smaller incidents of war, Singamangaraja had to withdraw to the Pakpak region, where in 1907 he was hunted down and killed by the Dutch. By that time, the Toba leader had lost much of his previous influence in the community.52

47 Castles 1972, pp. 21ff.
48 Castles 1972, pp. 30ff.
49 Aritonang 1994, p. 158.
51 Warneck 1925, pp. 128f.
Colonial expansion in North Tapanuli was slow and occurred with relatively little resistance from the indigenous population. Raja often co-operated with the colonial authorities in order to try to increase their own prestige. The main priorities of the central colonial administration were elsewhere, for instance, with the war in Aceh.53

The gradual incorporation of the Northern Batak groups implied that the colonial authorities had decided to found a separate residency that included all Batak groups. The original name suggested for the new territory was “Bataklan” (Battalanden), but it was not adopted. The reason was that the Malays, who lived in the coastal regions of the area, despised the Batak. Furthermore many Muslim Batak in the south thought that they had done away with their “Batakness” and did not want to be lumped together, as they saw it, with their crude neighbours to the north. Instead of “Bataklan” the more neutral name “Tapanuli” was finally accepted.54 The territory was divided into South and North Tapanuli, while the area around Sibolga, the capital of the Residency, was made into a separate administrative unit. North Tapanuli was also officially called the Division of Batak Lands (Afdeeling Bataklanden).55 The name implied that the government supported the view that the label “Batak” should be used mainly when referring to the northern Batak groups.

The highest colonial official in Tapanuli was the Resident in Sibolga, who in the north had an appointed Assistant Resident in Tarutung, the largest town in the area. North Tapanuli was further divided in six districts, each led by a controleur.56 Every controleur had a very small number of indigenous staff at his disposal. In 1919, the controleur of Samosir had, for instance, one clerk and two “helpers” (controleur-mannen).57

Each district was divided into smaller units (hundulan), led by an appointed raja called jaibutan. These raja were not salaried but were simply regarded as official representatives of the local population (volksheofden). Colonial administrators tried to adapt marga borders to the new structure, but the introduction of the system still implied that a large number of raja were side-stepped. After many complaints a raja paidua (second raja) was appointed in every hundulan. On the village level, the raja of the largest villages were appointed kepala kampung with authority over one or more villages. The administrative system was complicated and resulted in discontent and power struggles between the raja.58

53 Castles 1972, p. 33.
54 Tapanuli was the name of the bay outside Sibolga. Castles 1972, p. 2.
56 Castles 1972, pp. viii, 39f.
57 Castles 1972, p. 55.
58 Castles 1972, pp. 35ff.
While South Tapanuli was placed under government law, *adat* remained the basis of jurisdiction in the north. The basis of the legal system was special *adat* courts, led by *raja* assemblies and attended by district officers.  

During the first decade of the 20th century, North Tapanuli experienced an intensified colonial pressure. The killing of Singamangaraja in 1907 was a symbolic action undertaken to mark the beginning of a new policy. The colonial government generally intended to make the colonial system in the "outer islands" more efficient. They wanted to exploit the financial resources and labour of these regions in order to increase "development" and the fiscal revenues paid to the colonial state. Direct taxation was introduced and large segments of the male population were used as forced labour to construct roads and bridges. Because of their position in Toba society, *raja* were exempted from both taxation and compulsory labour. In North Tapanuli, the introduction of taxation was inefficient, but it still generated quite large revenues.

Administrative changes were also introduced. The Dutch regarded the old system in North Tapanuli as chaotic. In their view, there were simply too many *jaibuta* and *raja paidua* in too many *hundulan*. In order to solve these problems, the administration had already tried to reduce the number of *hundulan*, by abolishing the *hundulan* when a *jaibuta* died. In 1915, the *hundulan* were abolished and replaced by less numerous *negeri*. They were led by a *kepala negeri*. In many cases, the basic units became larger, but problems also appeared, since many of the old appointed leaders did not voluntarily retire. The second administrative change was the introduction of well-educated, indigenous officials (*demang*) with more authority than the assistants of the *controleur*. Each European *controleur* worked together with a *demang*, under whom worked two assistant *demang* in the outlying parts of the district. The intention was that *demang* would become loyal to the colonial system and be more reliable than the numerous, appointed *raja*.

These changes meant that the common people suffered from trying to obtain cash to pay taxes and male family members could be away for long periods of time. Compulsory labour was particularly burdensome and resented. The Toba felt that they were being treated like the contract labourers of the east coast, for whom they had only contempt. Administrative re-organisation had the effect that many *raja* and would-be *raja* felt side stepped by the *demang* upstarts. The *demang* in many cases abused the system, and corruption was widespread. The reduction

---

59 Shreiner 1972, pp. 118f. Castles 1972, p. 40. From Castles' account, it is not clear whether all *raja*, regardless of their acceptance as *volksboefden*, took part in these proceedings.
60 Castles 1972, pp. 46ff, 54f.
61 Castles 1972, pp. 49, 61ff.
and abolition of hundulan led to bitter conflicts for influence and many complaints to the colonial administration. 62

Colonial officers generally stressed the "pathological" eagerness of the Batak in North Tapanuli to bring formal complaints to them. These complaints were frequently related to conflicts within the local community but also to decisions taken by the local administration. One officer reserved Friday for complaints but could only hear a fraction of them. He received about 60 written complaints every month, at the same time as the local adat courts handled 745 civil cases. 63

Intensified colonial pressure on society in North Tapanuli led not only to complaints, but also to outright protest. One of the main groups of actors was the so-called parmalim, Batak religious groups who tried to combine traditional religion with Christianity, promoted at the time by missionaries in Tapanuli, and Islam. Parmalin leaders often had messianic ideas and delivered a millenarian message. Some expected the return of Singamangaraja to deliver them from Dutch rule. The parmalim led demonstrations and organised small-scale, military resistance. Even though the formal members were few, they could occasionally draw large crowds in protest. The parmalim were never strong enough to be able to undermine colonial order and were ruthlessly combated by the police. In this situation some accepted their destiny and declared that they had no political aspirations. They continued as very small non-political groups. 64

The other main example of opposition to the colonial authorities was Hatopan Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Association). This organisation was founded in 1917, had its base among Batak Christians and was led by people who had a western education. This movement will be discussed later in this chapter.

Even though these protests did not seriously threaten colonial order, they had the effect that the Dutch administration became careful not to implement new policies too rigidly. 65 Nationalist activities in North Tapanuli rarely had a mass base but were limited to a relatively small number of intellectuals. 66

The Dutch colonial expansion implied that contact with neighbouring areas increased. One important factor in this respect was the Trans-Sumatra highway,
which was completed in 1915 and connected North Tapanuli with the outside world.\textsuperscript{67} The influx of foreigners into North Tapanuli was not extensive. The main exception was the Chinese community, who from the late 19th century established enterprises and contributed to the development of small urban centres.\textsuperscript{68}

### Development of the Rhenish Mission Society

#### Founding and organising a mission society

In 1828, the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (RMG) was founded in the city of Barmen in Germany. It was the result of a merger of several Protestant mission societies.\textsuperscript{69} The new society was interdenominational, which in practice meant that it sought support from members of both Lutheran and Reformed traditions.\textsuperscript{70} In order to educate missionaries, the RMG founded a theological seminary where suitable candidates for missionary work were educated.\textsuperscript{71}

The mission was formally governed by the Board (Deputation), which was led by a Chairman (Präses). On the other hand, the \textit{de facto} leader of the society and the person who led the daily work was the Inspector of the seminary. During part of the 19th century, the leadership was divided between a First and a Second Inspector. From 1920 onwards the leader had the title of Director.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1829, the first RMG missionaries were sent to South Africa, where they began mission work around Stellenbosch.\textsuperscript{73} Even though the majority of the missionaries were Germans, a number of Dutch citizens and a few other Europeans were also employed. Initially, it was only male missionaries, ministers and laymen, who were trained and sent abroad, together with their families. Missionary wives were expected to take care of their families, but could occasionally also take initiatives of their own.\textsuperscript{74} In 1889, the RMG started to train single women to

\textsuperscript{68} For Chinese migration into the interior highlands including North Tapanuli, see Perret 1995, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{69} For the previous history of the RMG and the founding of the society, see Menzel 1978, pp. 18-23. For an analysis of the development of the society in connection with the general debate on how to relate missionary work to the existing Churches, see Aagard 1967, pp. 474ff, 485ff.
\textsuperscript{70} Even though this principle was generally agreed upon, there were still within the mission sometimes tensions between the two confessional groups. Menzel 1978, pp. 100ff.
\textsuperscript{71} Menzel 1978, pp. 26ff.
\textsuperscript{72} Menzel 1978, pp. 38ff.
\textsuperscript{73} Menzel 1978, pp. 52ff.
\textsuperscript{74} For an example from the RMG Sumatra mission, see Aritonang 1994, p. 126.
become missionaries (Schwester). The first woman missionary was the British Hester Needham, who in 1890 was sent to work for the RMG on Sumatra.\textsuperscript{75}

Theological developments: From individual conversion to the ideal of an autonomous People’s Church

The Rhenish Mission Society was a child of German Pietism. In general, Pietism stressed the need for an emotional, personal and individual faith, the literal interpretation of the Bible and the need for all truly dedicated Christians to work together. Within this broad framework, different theological positions were developed, also with regard to how foreign missions should be conducted.

The Pietists developed their mission theology in relation to the proponents of confessional Lutheranism. Confessional Lutheran mission theologians, such as the leader of the Lutheran Leipzig mission, Karl Graul (1814-64), opposed what they saw as the individualism of the Pietists. Instead, they stressed the collective identity of the people and that the goal of mission was to make the whole people Christian (Volkschristianisierung). The Mission should not gather a small group of “true” believers but found a People’s Church. These Churches should be based on the collective cultural identity of the people (Volksstum). This mission theology thus represents the fusion of Lutheranism and the idea derived from German Romanticism of the people (Volk) as a collective organic whole.\textsuperscript{76}

Within the framework of the RMG, Inspectors Wallman and Fabri represented mission theologies within the Pietistic tradition.

J. C. Wallman (1811-65) was a RMG Inspector from 1848 to 1857. He influenced not only his students but also many in the coming generation of RMG missionaries. Wallman was a Pietist for whom the idea of the urgent need for individual conversion was central. This conviction was combined with a strong adherence to the Lutheran confession.\textsuperscript{77}

In his theology of mission, he stressed the need of “the heathens who dwelled in darkness” to be saved, a typical theme of his age. Even though Wallman was a conservative German nationalist, he made, contrary to most missionary thinkers at the time, a distinction in principle between Christianity and western civilisation.

\textsuperscript{75} Menzel 1978, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{76} This theological current is analysed in Hoekendijk 1967, pp. 60-80. Graul’s theology is discussed on pp. 65ff, and the connection with Romanticism on pp. 78ff.
\textsuperscript{77} His strong Lutheranism occasionally caused problems with the Reformed supporters of the RMG. It was one factor behind his decision to leave the RMG in 1857 to work for the Berlin Mission. Schreiner 1972, p. 37. Menzel 1978, p. 50.
The goal of mission could not in any way include the idea of Europeanisation. Instead, non-Europeans should be given the opportunity to become Christians within the framework of their own culture. Missionaries should approach non-Christians with love and not with contempt for their culture and religion. The mind of the missionary should be free from any pretentious intentions to Europeanise. As evidence of his interest in non-western cultures, Wallman produced many works in missionary anthropology.78

It is clear that Wallman's fundamental distinction between the Gospel and western culture implied an anthropological interest in and a positive evaluation of the cultural framework within which people were converted to Christianity.

Wallman's successor Friedrich Fabri (1824-91) was RMG inspector during the period 1857-84. Having presented his doctoral dissertation in 1847, his position in the RMG was an outcome of the efforts of the Society to recruit academics to teach at the seminary. Fabri was one of the most respected and influential mission leaders in Germany. He devoted much time to political and social issues, but also to strengthening the support for the RMG, both in Germany and in the Netherlands.79

A central element in Fabri's theology was the Kingdom of God. According to him, the world is subordinate to the Kingdom of God, a spiritual entity that is active in human history but does not become part of it. The full realisation of the Kingdom is an eschatological reality that only can be grasped through personal faith.80 Conditioned by this basic ontology, Fabri developed his theology of mission. For him, the idea that a whole people could be converted to Christianity was a misconception. Instead, God calls individuals to become Christians (Einzelbekehrung), in order to gather them in an elect community (Auswahlgemeinde). When the Gospel has been preached to all peoples, the end of the world will come.81 As a result of Fabri's leadership, an increasing number of RMG missionaries were influenced by his theology of the Kingdom of God.82

In spite of his view that the Kingdom of God was not of this world, Fabri thought that Christian nations in the West, because of their high standard of civilisation, had a duty to spread Christianity and civilisation to the rest of the world. In relation to missionary organisations, colonial administrations should provide moral support and protection for the missionaries. In his book in 1879

78 Schreiner 1972, pp. 36ff., including n. 41.
80 Menzel 1978, p. 73. According to Menzel, Fabri should not be regarded as a Pietist, although he shared many theological elements with them. Menzel 1978, pp. 73ff. Menzel was probably concerned about Fabri's rather elaborate theory of "biblical metaphysics". For this theory, see Menzel 1978, pp. 73ff., and Schreiner 1978, pp. 64ff.
82 Menzel 1978, p. 73.
Bedarf Deutschland der Kolonien? (Does Germany need Colonies?), Fabri petitioned the government of the newly unified Germany led by Chancellor Bismarck to engage in efforts to establish colonies. Fabri has consequently been dubbed "the father of German colonialism." When from the 1880s Germany started to establish colonies of its own, the RMG came to function as a German colonial mission in Namibia and New Guinea.

It is apparent that Fabri developed his theology in a direction that contrasted with Wallman's clear distinction between the Gospel and western culture. The emergence of the grand era of imperialism, an era which Wallman did not experience, had a strong impact on Fabri's line of reasoning. It had the effect that Wallman's positive interest in the cultural framework of the converts was superseded by a stress on "the civilising mission of the West".

During the latter part of the 19th century, a new current of thought began to influence the RMG. It was stimulated by Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), the most influential, German mission theorist during the latter part of the 19th century. In 1871, Warneck was employed by the RMG as a teacher at the seminary. He worked for the organisation until 1874, when he became the minister of a small congregation in Saxony. From 1896 to 1909, he was Professor of Missions in Halle. His influence in Germany came from his writings, which were inspired by extensive contacts with missionary circles and missions abroad. His thinking was consciously based on missionary experience, theory and practice were intertwined. Warneck had particularly close contacts with the RMG mission on Sumatra. The nature and implication of these contacts will be considered later in this chapter.

In his theology of mission, Warneck combined the Pietistic idea of individual conversion with the goal of Volkschristianisierung, the latter infused with ideas from Romanticism. With regard to the subject of mission, the whole Church is, according to Warneck, in principle responsible for propagating the faith. But because such an engagement cannot be expected from all church members, the task is left to the true believers, the core of the Church (ecclesia). The ultimate object of mission is, however, to Christianise the whole people and to found a People's Church. The process is a gradual one. It starts with individuals, but later the message embraces families and villages, until the whole people has become Christian. The true believ-

---

84 This chapter in the history of the RMG is outlined in Menzel 1978, pp. 216ff.
85 Menzel 1978, p. 73.
86 Aagard 1967, pp. 17f. For Warneck's role as educator, author and academic, see Myklebust 1955, pp. 280ff.
ers are the motor in this process. In this way, the conversion of individuals is the basis for the conversion of a people and simultaneous with it.

An important element in Warneck's ideal of the People's Church was that the Church should be autonomous. In this respect he was influenced by the so-called Three Selves formula, a prominent element in the Anglo-Saxon mission debate from the 1850s onwards.

The Three Selves formula was developed by the British Anglican Henry Venn (1776-1873) and the American Congregationalist Rufus Anderson (1796-1880). According to them, the object of mission is to found a Church that is "self-supportive, self-governed and self-propagating". The Church should be self-supportive in the sense that it should not be dependent on financial support or personnel from abroad. Educating local co-workers was therefore an essential task of mission organisations. To be self-governed implied that indigenous Christian leaders should take over authority from the missionaries, in order that the new Christians should rule their Church themselves. The Church should furthermore be self-propagating. The task of expanding the Church should be the responsibility, not of missionaries, but of indigenous Christians.

We should note that the Three Selves formula, at least in the case of Venn, was combined with a firm conviction of the superiority of westerners over non-western peoples. Venn thought, for instance, that it took much longer for an indigenous Christian to become mature enough for the priesthood than for a western Christian.

The Three Selves formula was not only a theoretical ideal. Venn and Anderson both tried to implement it in missions they had contact with. Venn's convictions were one important factor when the former slave Samuel Adjai Crowther in 1864 was consecrated as the first African Anglican bishop and became a bishop in

---

88 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 79f. Hoekendijk 1967, p. 89. According to Beyerhaus, Warneck was not entirely clear whether the People's Church could really be said to be a "true Church", or whether the term "Church" should refer only to the "true believers". Beyerhaus 1956, p. 80. The example shows that Warneck had problems in completely doing away with some traditional Pietistic assumptions, even when he articulated another point of view. For a general perspective on the transformation of Pietism and the development of Warneck's ideal of Volkschristianisierung, see Frick 1924.

89 For a thorough analysis of the Three Selves formula, as developed by Venn and Anderson, see Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 31-56. Despite their basic agreement on the formula, the two missiologists differed as to its precise interpretation. With regard to how they conceived of the new Churches, Venn thought of a unified Church led by bishops, in the same manner as the Church of England. Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 39f. As a Congregationalist, Anderson conceived of the Church as consisting of mutually independent congregations, a Church that in theory could be implemented more quickly than Venn's local Anglican Church. Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 47, 52.

90 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 36, 41. Beyerhaus does not explicitly say what views Anderson had of non-western peoples.
Nigeria. In 1863, Anderson, in his work for the American Board of Commissioners, visited Hawaii and formulated statutes whereby an independent “Hawaiian Board” was set up. In this new body American missionaries and Hawaiian ministers would work together as equals. In this process he had to challenge missionaries who did not consider Hawaiians mature enough to assume effective leadership in the Church.

In Germany, the position that the goal of mission was to create autonomous Churches had been put forward by Karl Graul as early as 1847, a few years before Venn and Anderson articulated their formula. However, the formula did not occupy a central position in Graul's theology of mission and was not taken up by others. It was only in 1890 that M. Zahn launched the Three Selves formula in a programmatic form in an article in Warneck's Allgemeine Missions Zeitschrift. Zahn certainly inspired Warneck, but the latter had, on the other hand, already been in intensive communication with Anderson. In Warneck's theology of mission, the Three Selves formula became an important element but in the process took on new accents.

For Warneck, the education and ordination of indigenous personnel, such as evangelists, teachers and ministers, were important priorities. Their efforts would pave the way for the new Christians to support their Church financially. On the issue of the Church being self-governing, Warneck held that the Church was independent, in the sense that it should not be subject to the strict confessional definitions of the European Churches, or take over unaltered European forms of liturgy and church order. It was far more important for indigenous Christians to have the Bible translated into their own language than to mimic European forms of confession and worship.

Over the years, Warneck became much more hesitant than his Anglo-Saxon predecessors about the actual transfer of authority from missionaries to indigenous Christians. He labelled the viewpoint of Venn and Anderson as “independentish” (unabhängigistisch) and the independent Church bodies they had tried to create as “artificial creations” (künstliche Gebäude). Being a firm believer in the inferiority of non-western peoples, Warneck was convinced that indigenous Christian leaders could develop their character only very gradually and slowly, in

---

91 For a discussion of his consecration, see Beyerhaus 1956, p. 136. Crowther's career and influence in Nigeria are analysed in Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 126-145.
92 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 50f.
93 Beyerhaus 1956, p. 45.
94 Hoekendijk 1967, p. 66.
95 Beyerhaus 1956, p. 78, including n. 7.
96 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 85f.
97 Beyerhaus 1956, p. 84.
order for them to be mature enough to assume independent leadership. The organisational independence of the new Churches was regarded as something that would come about only far into the future.

In spite of his negative evaluation of "the heathen races", Warneck thought that non-Christian peoples should become Christians within the framework of their own culture. According to him non-Christian peoples have remnants of general revelation in the form of "the scattered word of God" (logos spermatikos) and are consequently not spiritually dead. Their distinctive culture (Volkstum) can therefore, through the Gospel, be purified to become the basis of the People's Church. It was therefore important that indigenous Christians should not be uprooted from their own culture that they collectively shared. To be more specific, Warneck thought that traditional clothing, general forms of courtesy, social institutions, legal traditions, art and traditional celebrations should be respected and used to build the Church, provided that these cultural elements were not in clear opposition to Christianity.

In relation to colonialism, Warneck shared the common idea that Germans were superior to "pagans" in matters of culture and religion and had the right to have colonies. On the other hand, he held the view that also western culture contained elements that were opposed to the Gospel, such as materialism and intellectualism.

Warneck shared Fabri and Wallman's sense of their own superiority in relation to non-western peoples. But he supported Wallman's positive view of the role of non-western cultures and the idea that the missionary should not try to Europeanise the converts. His theology included Wallman and Fabri's Pietistic idea of the ecclesiola but placed it in the service of the ultimate goal, a People's Church.

With August Schreiber (1839-1903), the theology of Warneck became dominant in the RMG leadership. Schreiber was the first RMG missionary with a university degree in theology, and he worked in Sumatra from 1866 to 1873. In 1874, he succeeded Warneck as a teacher in the seminary, and in 1889 he became the first missionary to lead the mission. He functioned as Inspector until his death in 1903. In Schreiner's opinion, Schreiber was, after Fabri, the most influential of the RMG leaders.

---

98 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 82f.
100 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 84f. Aritonang 1994, p. 82.
101 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 84f.
102 This conclusion is implied in Aritonang 1994, p. 87
103 Aritonang 1994, p. 86.
104 Schreiner 1972, p. 75.
In the same way as Warneck, Schreiber accepted that indigenous cultures were "a preparation for the Gospel" (preparatio evangelica) and that the goal of mission was to found autonomous People's Churches. Schreiber shared the negative view about the intellectual abilities of "the heathen" but did not emphasise it as much as Fabri and Warneck. During his studies in England in 1864-65 he was influenced directly by the Three Selves formula. Therefore he accepted a more original version of the formula than Warneck did. In contrast to Warneck, Schreiber strongly emphasised the necessity to transfer authority to indigenous personnel as quickly as possible, and not to wait until they were mature enough.

On the question of the relation between mission and colonialism, Schreiber was closer to Wallman than to Fabri. He upheld the view that missionary work should be separated from colonialism, because the two had very different points of departure and objectives. Mission should not destroy indigenous cultures but elevate and purify them within the framework of a People's Church. Schreiber agreed, for instance, that colonial governments should provide subsidies to mission schools. On the other hand, he highlighted that colonial administrations often neglected the mission schools. Instead, they supported their own schools, which were secular and competed with the schools of the mission organisations.

To sum up, the theological development of the RMG during the latter part of the 19th century had the effect that the Pietistic goal of individual conversion was integrated in the ideal that the goal of mission was to found a Church encompassing the whole people. An important character of this Church was that it would fulfil the Three Selves formula. The general assumption of western or, more specifically, German superiority over non-western peoples implied that there was a strong tendency to postpone the implementation of some aspects of the formula. The main one was the issue of the new converts actually taking over the effective leadership of their Church.

With regard to the role of the culture of the converts, the assumption of western superiority led Fabri to emphasise strongly "the civilising mission of the West". Even though they shared the idea of the superiority of the West, Warneck and Schreiber followed Wallman's positive view of non-western cultures in relation to missionary work. The culture of the converts, although cleansed of "pagan elements", was a necessary cornerstone of the People's Church.

---

107 Aritonang 1994, p. 90. The situation in the Netherlands Indies certainly played an important role when Schreiber developed these ideas. See the discussion of RMG educational policies on Sumatra later in this chapter.
The Rhenish Mission on Sumatra, its strategy and Batak participation (1861-1930)

The general development of the RMG mission on Sumatra

The involvement of the RMG in Indonesia started in 1834, when the Board decided to send missionaries to Borneo. Two years later, RMG missionaries, from their base in Banjarmasin, situated on the south-eastern coast of the island, started to pursue mission work among the Dayak peoples in the interior.108

During the 1820s and 1830s the Dutch, from their base on Java, had expanded their political influence in Borneo and made unequal treaties with local rulers, including the Sultan of Banjarmasin. In 1859, local discontent led to the so-called Banjarmasin War, which lasted until 1863. The spark that lit the fire was the Dutch installation of an unpopular candidate as Sultan of Banjarmasin. During the war, Europeans, including missionaries, were forced to leave the area.109

When the RMG missionaries had been expelled from Borneo, the Society started to look for another mission field in the Dutch colony. During a visit to the Dutch Bible Society, Inspector Fabri received information that mission work among the Batak on Sumatra seemed to be a promising venture. The Dutch Society had already sent a linguist named van der Tuuk to Indonesia, where he had written a grammar of the Toba Batak language and translated parts of the Bible. In October 1860, the formal decision was made by the RMG board in Germany to start mission work in North Sumatra, and in 1861 the first missionaries arrived there.110

The RMG also started a mission on the island of Nias off the west coast of Sumatra, but this mission is not relevant to this study.

Before the 1860s, a few isolated efforts were made to pursue Christian missionary work in North Tapanuli. In 1834, two American Baptist missionaries entered the Silindung Valley. Their effort turned out to be a complete failure. They may have been suspected of being Dutch lackeys and were rounded up and killed. According to both the RMG missionaries and the Toba, they were ritually eaten.111

In the late 1850s, the missionaries named van Asselt and Betz, who represented a small Dutch mission society, the Emerlo Mission, arrived in Sipirok. This

---

109 Ricklefs 1981, pp. 130f.
110 Menzel 1978, pp. 81f.
111 For the missionary account, see Warneck 1925, pp. 14f. During a meeting with the Bishop, Dr. Andar Lumbantobing, in 1986, he said that his relatives were the ones who ate the missionaries and that it was their duty to do so.
is a part of the Angkola Batak area in the northernmost area of South Tapanuli. At the time, the area was a religious border-zone, where Muslim missionaries were steadily making progress among adherents of traditional religion. When the RMG missionaries Heine and Klammer arrived in Sipirok, they made contact with the Emerlo missionaries. In 1861, a meeting was held at which the two missions decided to integrate their efforts, which implied that the Emerlo missionaries came to work for the RMG.

In Sipirok, only a minority of the Batak converted to Christianity, while the majority became Muslims. It was only when the RMG mission expanded to the north, into the territory of the Toba Batak, where Islam had not penetrated, that large numbers of people joined the new religion.

The pioneer of the work in North Tapanuli was Ludvig Nommensen (1834-1918). In 1862, he arrived in Sumatra and settled in Baros, a town that represented the northernmost extension of Dutch influence. Nommensen wanted to reach the interior parts of the island, where Islam and Dutch troops had not penetrated. He lived together with some Toba youth and with their help started to study the Toba Batak language. He also made a short trip into the interior, where he was received in a friendly way. In 1864, Nommensen convinced his fellow missionaries and the Dutch colonial authorities that he should be allowed to establish himself in the Silindung Valley.

The first conversions to Christianity in Silindung occurred in the same year that Nommensen settled there. Owing to the collective nature of their society, these converts were expelled from the community. They lost houses and fields and had to leave the villages. In this situation, Nommensen created a separate village for them called “Huta Dame” (Village of Peace), a Christian village where Nommensen himself was regarded as rajja. According to him, this separate village was problematic because it isolated the Christians from the rest of society and gave him a political role to which he did not aspire. To the converts, Nommensen instead stressed that he was not a new rajja but a teacher and that those who joined the new religion need not change their culture or political leadership.

After a couple of years, Nommensen was able to secure the confidence of a small but growing group of rajja. The most influential of them was Raja Pontas.

---

112 Aritonang 1994, p. 3.
113 See Warneck's negative account of Muslim missionaries in Warneck 1925, pp. 31ff.
114 Menzel 1978, p. 82.
115 In 1930, 10% of the population in Sipirok had become Christian. The remainder of the population had converted to Islam. Nyhus 1987, p. 82.
116 Warneck 1925, pp. 18, 24f.
117 Warneck 1925, p. 25.
118 Schreiner 1972, pp. 116f.
Lumbantobing, who was baptised in 1867. The raja thought that, with the presence of missionaries and the arrival of Dutch troops near the borders of North Tapanuli, new times had come and the old ways were becoming irrelevant. For Raja Lumbantobing, the right way to adapt to these changes was to ally himself with the mission.\textsuperscript{119}

The missionaries accepted that a precondition for their success was that they could gain support from the raja. This conviction was strengthened after some disappointing cases in the Sipirok area, where a raja would initially support the mission but later convert to Islam with a majority of his people.\textsuperscript{120} Even though the raja had lost their political independence, they continued to be influential on the local level and remained in charge of the legal administration of adat.\textsuperscript{121} The mission wanted to use their general standing in society and to enable them to continue their important role in society even after having converted to Christianity.

Because of the collective nature of Toba society, the conversion of a raja implied that he could make his subordinates follow. In the new Church the RMG missionaries saw the raja as a “Christian overlordship”. They were given responsibility for congregational life and church discipline and were regularly called together to discuss important issues with the missionaries. On the local level, they were consulted before important decisions were made. The missionaries regarded them as one of the main pillars of the Church. Raja were in many cases willing to co-operate and in many villages the raja was the first man to convert to Christianity. In the Silindung Valley, they often competed with each other, requesting that a missionary be stationed in their village.\textsuperscript{122}

To ally oneself with the powerful mission organisation was one important means of gaining prestige in the new situation. There is even at least one example in which the mission decided to station a missionary in an area only after the raja had threatened to become a Muslim if his demand for a missionary was not met.\textsuperscript{123}

The interaction between missionaries and raja has so far not been studied from the perspective of the different positions assigned to the raja within the Dutch administration.\textsuperscript{124} In one short paragraph, Johannes Warneck says that raja who were not selected by the Dutch became disappointed and estranged from the

\textsuperscript{120} Castles 1972, pp. 27f.
\textsuperscript{121} Shreiner 1972, pp. 118f.
\textsuperscript{122} Beyerhaus 1956, p. 171. Shreiner 1972, p. 118. For a detailed discussion of the relations between various raja in relation to the mission, see Hutauruk 1980, pp. 100ff.
\textsuperscript{123} Warneck 1925, pp. 83f.
\textsuperscript{124} Shreiner and Aritonang refer only to raja in general, Shreiner 1972, pp. 118f. Aritonang 1994, pp. 116ff. Castles does not take up the issue in his short discussion of the motivations of raja to convert to Christianity, Castles 1972, pp. 31f.
mission, while those who obtained official positions were proud. According to Warneck, the mission did not want to interfere in this process, because of its sensitive nature.\footnote{Warneck 1912, p. 140.} Despite Warneck's assurance to the contrary, it is likely that missionaries would suggest candidates whom they regarded as suitable to the Dutch authorities.\footnote{In a later edition of Warneck's work on the history of the mission, the sentence about the lack of involvement on behalf of the mission has been deleted, see Warneck 1925, pp. 126f. This may be indirect evidence that missionaries were actually involved.} Bearing in mind the general influence of the mission, these suggestions would have been important when raja were appointed. I also assume that missionaries made special efforts to foster good relations with raja who had high official positions, such as jaibuta. On the other hand, it can be expected that raja not appointed by the Dutch or lower in rank were later particularly eager to compensate for their loss of hasangapon by allying themselves with the mission.

As regarded the colonial administration, the RMG benefited from its multifaceted relation to it. On the one hand, the mission had a steady support from the colonial power. Stamford Raffles had already, during his position as head of the British presence on Java in the period 1811-16, conceived a plan for a Christian mission in the region. Raffles supported mission among the Batak in order to establish a Christian “wedge” between the strong Muslim areas of Minangkabau to the south and Aceh to the north.\footnote{Pedersen 1970, p. 47.} Raffles’ plan was not implemented, but his line of reasoning came to influence the Dutch colonial administration when they had resumed control over Java. After having fought in the Padri War in the Minangkabau area and entered into another war in Aceh in 1873, the Dutch feared a unified Muslim Sumatra. The need to stop the expansion of Islam among the Batak became one of the goals of the Dutch administration. Consequently, it was willing to give strong support to the Christian mission in North Tapanuli.\footnote{Castles 1976, pp. 25ff, 42.}

The colonial authorities also supported the mission through the so-called comity policy. In general, this implied that one Christian organisation obtained a monopoly of mission work in a certain area. In North Sumatra, the RMG held that monopoly until the 1930s, when the Catholic Church was allowed to enter the area.\footnote{The struggle of the Catholic Church to obtain access to Tapanuli is described in Aster 1959, pp. 41ff. I shall return to this aspect of mission history in Chapter 5.}

The comity principle was aimed only at regulating the activities of western missionaries. Indigenous Christians, who had contacts with other Christian organisations or movements, could pursue missionary work without being limited...
by comity regulations. The other aspect of the policy was that it was intended to keep Christian missionaries out of areas where it was thought that missionary work might lead to severe opposition. This was generally the case in areas dominated by Islam. The RMG was, in other words, assigned a specific and limited territory, where it had the privilege of working “undisturbed” by other missionary organisations.

The Dutch administration not only lent support in principle to the mission but supported it in various practical ways. From 1893 onwards, subsidies were provided for teachers’ salaries and the construction of mission schools. Indigenous clergy, teachers and elders were exempted from compulsory labour service, a policy that naturally increased the attraction of these positions to the Toba. At the request of the mission, the government also banned some elements and rites of traditional religion. In areas dominated by Christianity, the buis sacrifices and the playing of gondang were forbidden.

For their part, the RMG missionaries clearly supported the incorporation of North Tapanuli into the Dutch colony. The missionary Johanssen, for instance, supported colonisation “for the sake of creating an orderly administration upholding truth and justice, together with wiping out savage behaviour such as cannibalism, warfare etc.”

In relation to the Toba, the RMG consciously used the support of the colonial power to their advantage. Even before any Dutch troops were deployed in North Tapanuli, Nommensen would sometimes show his Dutch permit to work in the area when he felt threatened by local leaders. When the colonisation of North Tapanuli was under way, Singamangaraja often threatened to strike against the mission stations. In these situations the missionaries appealed for and received military support from Dutch troops. The RMG missionaries also hailed the killing of Singamangaraja as a benevolent act that paved the way for the mission.

To the Toba, these events made it clear that the mission had the protection of the expanding colonial power and that both mission and colonialism would enter North Tapanuli, regardless of whether they desired it or not. To them, the

---

130 Two examples are the Adventist mission and the Pentecostal mission, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.
132 Castles 1972, pp. 43, 203. Other historians are silent on this matter.
133 Vergouwen 1964, pp. 79, 102f.
134 Quotation from Aritonang 1994, p. 121.
136 For one example, see Warneck 1925, pp. 117f.
137 Warneck thought that God had made Singamangaraja blind to his own real interests and had used him and his death to make the mission successful. Warneck 1925, pp. 127ff.
Map III. North Sumatra during the period of the RMG.
Adapted from Aritonang 1994.
death of Singamangaraja implied that they had lost their only military and religious leader who could command a large following. When the Toba had been forced to accept a new political authority, many of them also decided to join the new religion promoted by the Europeans.

The RMG mission and the Dutch authorities were, on the other hand, clearly distinguishable entities. The mission originated not in the Netherlands but in Germany and had arrived in the Silindung Valley before any Dutch troops had entered it. It was also clear to the Toba that Dutch soldiers and colonial officers wanted to establish and administer Dutch rule, while the RMG missionaries intended to convert them to Christianity. These conditions implied that the Toba in general did not regard the mission as a means of subjugating them politically.138

The RMG mission had also a more powerful organisation than the colonial administration. It had more European personnel and generally better contacts with the local population through the network of congregations and many indigenous co-workers. Before 1914, when an acute financial crisis hit the RMG, the mission could even be regarded as “a state within the state” in North Tapanuli.139

Compared with the missionaries, who often lived there for several decades, the colonial administrators stayed only a couple of years in North Tapanuli. The latter thought that the RMG missionaries were narrow-minded but envied them their close contacts with the local population.140 Colonial officers sometimes complained that the RMG missionaries were too embedded in the Toba social system and culture in general. A high colonial officer, generally very supportive of the mission, once wrote that some missionaries because of their all too long residence among the native population, their isolation from Europeans in the general sense, wrapped up in the needs of their own environment, are so petrified and Batakized in their way of thinking that they cannot sympathise with our present-day concept of administration care ... 141.

---

138 Aritonang 1994, p. 118. One may compare this development with the mission of the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) in the Karo Batak area. The NZG mission started in 1889 after a Karo revolt against the expansion of commercial plantations into their area. It was thought that the Christian mission would neutralise the resistance of the Karo. The endeavour of the Missionary Society was therefore clearly a colonial mission, a fact that made the Karo much more hesitant towards the new religion than the Toba Batak. For a balanced discussion of the Karo mission as a colonial mission, see Smith Kipp 1990.


140 Castles 1972, p. 45.

141 Quotation from J. Barth who served as Resident of Tapanuli from 1911 to 1915. Castles 1972, p. 44. The quotation betrays that the colonial officer was upset by the problems of implementing administrative changes. But it could nevertheless be used, as Castles does, to illustrate the attitude to the missionaries in a general sense.
The Toba regarded the mission as a main authority in the area. They basically saw the RMG as a power-yielding organisation and interpreted it in relation to their key cultural concepts. In the Toba perspective, the Church was the main *sabala* organisation in Tapanuli, i.e. a powerful organisation that could provide many material and spiritual benefits and therefore had most prestige. To ally oneself with the mission implied that one got access to the *sabala* that the mission represented, manifested through the presence of missionaries.\(^{142}\)

The mission was based in Pearaja-Tarutung in the Silindung Valley and was led by a missionary, who from 1881 onwards was entitled Ephorus.\(^{143}\) Male missionaries were stationed on mission stations, while women missionaries usually worked as nurses in mission hospitals or as teachers, supervised by male missionaries. The mission stations led the work of the local congregations, where Toba ministers, evangelists and teachers worked. On the local level, there were also elected elders, who worked in the congregation together with the other Toba personnel. Election of elders took place every second year and they functioned as representatives of the congregation vis-à-vis the indigenous clergy and the missionaries.\(^{144}\)

During this period of rapid expansion the missionaries occasionally held large meetings for Batak Christians. In 1881 a conference was held in Pearaja with a total of 3500 participants, who included teachers, elders, *raja* and common congregational members.\(^{145}\) These meetings should be interpreted as a way of testifying to a common Christian identity and to the strength of the Christian community.

From the 1880s, the RMG expanded its work into the Humbang highlands and into the area around the Toba Lake. During the first few decades of the 20th century, they also entered the Simalungun Batak and Pakpak Batak areas.\(^{146}\) These Batak groups were smaller that the Toba and, while many converted to Christianity, Islam eventually became the religion of the majority.\(^{147}\) The implication is that the Toba came to dominate the mission to such an extent that it often appears to be a mission exclusively for them.\(^{148}\)

---

\(^{142}\) Castles 1972, pp. 137f.

\(^{143}\) A. Schreiber was the first leader of the mission with the title of Praeses. After Schreiber left Sumatra in 1873, Nommensen became Praeses and was appointed Ephorus in 1881. Warneck 1925, p. 93. Aritonang 1994, pp. 89, 154.

\(^{144}\) About the elders, see Warneck 1925, pp. 93f.

\(^{145}\) Warneck 1925, p. 82.

\(^{146}\) Aritonang 1994, pp. 153-160, provides a general overview of the expansion of the mission in these areas.


\(^{148}\) The dominance of the Toba Batak language in the Church was, for instance, one reason behind the relatively slow expansion in Simalungun and the later efforts of Simalungun Christians to obtain a special district within the mission. Saragih 1979, pp. 53, 40f.
The expansion of the mission led the missionaries to divide the area into several districts. In 1911, the mission consisted of five districts: Angkola (the southernmost district), Silindung, Humbang (the region between the Silindung Valley and Lake Toba), Toba (the area around lake Toba, including Samosir) and Simalungun (including the east coast of Sumatra and the Pakpak area). Each district was under the leadership of a missionary who was elected Praeses by the other missionaries in the district.

The quantitative growth of the mission until World War I can be clearly demonstrated from the statistics of 1914. They show that 74 European missionaries were employed. Fifty-six of them were male ministers, 6 laymen and 13 women missionaries. In the same year, 34 indigenous ministers, 19 evangelists and 789 teachers were employed by the mission. They served 507 congregations and 515 schools.

The development of the mission cannot be evaluated only from these internal statistics but has to be related to the general religious situation in North Tapanuli. For this purpose, one may use the government census of 1930, which had religious adherence as one item.

The statistics in Table III have been adapted from Nyhus, who used the census of 1930 and added corresponding percentages to each entry. In the census, the Roman Catholics had one separate category, but since not more than 9 persons in any district considered themselves Catholic Christians, they have been omitted in this context.

The general statistics show that traditional religion and Christianity both claimed the allegiance of roughly 50% of the total population, while the other Abrahamitic religion, Islam, had only penetrated in small numbers. In 1914, the percentage of Christians in the area was 41%. These statistics show that most of the RMG expansion took place before 1914 and that the increase until 1930 was slower.

In the traditional Toba Batak regions (Samosir, Toba, Humbang and Silindung, including Tarutung), the Christian Toba represented 219,995 individuals or 53% of a population of 416,892, while traditional religion claimed 188,630 (45%). Islam had not penetrated significantly into these areas and had only 8,267 adherents (2%).

---

149 Hutauruk 1986, p. 27.
150 This is implied in Nyhus 1987, pp. 61, 167.
151 Aritonang 1994, pp. 226f.
152 Nyhus 1987, p. 82.
153 In 1914, the population of North Tapanuli was 385,000. Castles 1972, p. 41. In the same year, the RMG claimed 159,024 converts. Aritonang 1994, p. 226.
### Table III. Religious adherence in North Tapanuli, 1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Traditional Religion</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barus</td>
<td>47,410</td>
<td>36,486 (77%)</td>
<td>4,845 (10%)</td>
<td>6,799 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairi/Pakpak</td>
<td>53,256</td>
<td>33,246 (62%)</td>
<td>13,561 (26%)</td>
<td>6,449 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samosir</td>
<td>96,139</td>
<td>82,850 (86%)</td>
<td>13,271 (14%)</td>
<td>18 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toba</td>
<td>134,753</td>
<td>68,678 (51%)</td>
<td>64,483 (48%)</td>
<td>1,592 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humbang</td>
<td>84,751</td>
<td>31,618 (37%)</td>
<td>53,066 (63%)</td>
<td>67 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silindung</td>
<td>98,616</td>
<td>5,418 (5%)</td>
<td>86,757 (88%)</td>
<td>6,441 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarutung (town)</td>
<td>2,633</td>
<td>66 (2%)</td>
<td>2,418 (92%)</td>
<td>149 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Tapanuli</td>
<td>517,558</td>
<td>258,362 (50%)</td>
<td>238,401 (46%)</td>
<td>20,795 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same year, the official statistics of the RMG claimed that the number of Christians under its auspices was 292,754. This figure would include about 10,000 non-Toba Christians in the South Tapanuli region and not more than 2,000 Christian Simalungun and Pakpak Batak. Christian Toba who had migrated to, for example, the Pakpak region or outside North Tapanuli would also have been included. If one regards both government and mission statistics as good approximations, an estimation would be that 55-60% of the Toba had become Christians in 1930.

The highest percentage of converts to Christianity in a district, 88%, was in the Silindung Valley, followed by Humbang, where 63% had become Christian. The area around Lake Toba was roughly divided equally between Christians and adherents of traditional religion, while the island of Samosir was largely dominated by traditional religionists. From the statistics, it is apparent that the RMG had been able to gradually expand its influence in areas where the mission did not face serious competition from Islam.

The strength of the Christian mission should, however, not be judged from statistics only. In relation to traditional religion, the messianic parmalim movements and Islam, the RMG mission had many more resources and a centralised

---

154 Aritonang 1994, p. 301.

155 For the South Tapanuli statistics, see Nyhus 1987, p. 82. In 1928, there were 900 Christian Simalungun. *Jubileum GKPS*, p. 75. The number of Christian Pakpak was at most not larger. *Eben Ezer* 1986, the history of the Pakpak Church, is silent on the matter.

156 The RMG mission would certainly have an interest in claiming as many converts as possible. On the other hand, Toba congregations might not in all cases have reported all members to the missionaries. The reason would be that, by so doing, they could avoid paying as much to the central mission organisation as they otherwise ought to have done. Batak church leaders have told me that the latter practice occurs today.

157 Almost all the Toba urban migrants had become Christian, while the rural migrants, mainly to the Pakpak region and Simalungun, probably included groups of traditional religionists.
organisation. In the Toba perspective, Christianity was associated with access to “the modern world” because the mission provided access to education and western health services. On the other hand, religious boundaries were not always very clear-cut and traditional concepts influenced in many ways the Toba interpretation of their new faith. Some examples will be provided later in this chapter.

Einzelbekehrung and Volkschristianizierung in the RMG mission on Sumatra

In a previous section, I have sketched the theological development of the RMG until the end of the 19th century. It involved a shift from an emphasis on individual conversion (Einzelbekehrung) to a strategy whose ultimate goal was to make the entire people Christian (Volkschristianizierung). The latter was inspired by Gustav Warneck, who with great effect introduced the theme into the German missiological debate.

How did this change relate to the concrete work of the mission on Sumatra? There are two interrelated issues at stake here. The first is the concrete strategies that were used by the mission on Sumatra. The second is the nature of the interaction between Warneck’s missionary theory and RMG missionary practice on Sumatra.

With regard to the strategies used by RMG missionaries on Sumatra, Beyerhaus says that a continuous striving to the north was a dominant feature of missionary work from its inception in 1861. According to him:

This proves that they had decisively broken with the old Herrnhut-Pietistic ideal to convert individual souls … From the start the goal of missionary work was to win the whole people, in other words, the People’s Church. Nommensen pursued this leitmotiv in a non-compromising way.158

Beyerhaus seems to have fallen prey to the misconception that Volkschristianizierung was the only strategy actually used by the missionaries. This is not altogether surprising. Johannes Warneck, the son of Gustav Warneck, worked for the RMG on Sumatra from 1893 to 1908 and succeeded Nommensen as Ephorus in 1920. In 1932, he moved to Germany and became Director of the whole mission society. His influential books about the mission are completely in line with his father’s ideal of Volkschristianizierung. Since then, the RMG Batak mission has often been cited as a prime example of the build-up of a People’s Church. The tendency to stress Volkschristianizierung has had the effect that the role of the earlier ideal has not been given due attention.

Johannes Warneck himself cannot, however, rightly be said to have overlooked the older missionary ideal. In the introduction to his *50 Jahre Batakmission*, he has an interesting discussion about the two ideals, a hotly debated issue he says. He states clearly that the first missionaries did not have the intention to found a People's Church, only to convert individuals. Warneck claims that the first priority of the missionary is and should always be to convert individuals.\(^{159}\) In so doing, he will bring Christianity to the whole people.\(^{160}\) The perspective is clearly in line with his father's idea that the *ecclesiola* will bring about the *ecclesia*. According to Johannes Warneck, this development will be the case even if the missionary theoretically renounces the idea that *Volkschristianizierung* is a desirable goal and in accordance with God's purposes.\(^{161}\)

In this context, Warneck does not mention Nommensen by name. Despite the praise Warneck generally bestow on the missionary pioneer, the latter is in this context implicitly criticised for not knowing the true meaning of Christian mission. It may have been that Warneck and Nommensen had actually engaged in a hot debate over the goal of missionary work. The rest of Warneck's narrative is coloured by his own missionary ideal. It has the effect that, when Warneck relates the story of Nommensen's endeavours, he does not refer to Nommensen's own theology of mission in order to interpret his work within that framework.\(^{162}\)

Hoekendijk supports Warneck when he makes the general statement that Nommensen was heavily influenced by Fabri's theology and that he implemented the ideal of *Einzelbekehrung* influenced by a theology of the Kingdom of God.\(^{163}\) Schreiner also says that the first missionaries, including Nommensen, never accepted the ideal of *Volkschristianizierung*.\(^{164}\) On the other hand, Schreiner does not attempt to interpret Nommensen's missionary activities, in Schreiner's case mainly the interpretation of *adat*, in relation to the missionary's Pietistic theology. The same criticism applies to Aritonang, who briefly refers to the ideal of *Einzelbekehrung* but does not interpret the activities of the first missionaries in the light of that ideal.\(^{165}\)

---

\(^{159}\) With this wording Warneck was obviously trying to please RMG supporters who stood firm in their traditional pietistic values.

\(^{160}\) Warneck 1912, p. 8f.

\(^{161}\) Warneck 1912, p. 8f.

\(^{162}\) See Warneck 1925, pp. 23ff, 45ff.

\(^{163}\) Hoekendijk 1967, p. 58. For this point, Hoekendijk refers to Delius 1940.

\(^{164}\) Schreiner 1972, p. 79. See also Hoekendijk 1967, p. 58.

\(^{165}\) See Aritonang 1994, pp. 69ff, 111f, 175f. Delius, who noticed the impact of Fabri's theology on Nommensen's thinking, only analyses forms of preaching and not the general question of missionary strategy. See Delius 1940. A recent biography of Nommensen, Lehmann 1996, does not make any attempt to relate Nommensen to missionary thinking in the West or analyse his strategy in these terms. The work instead appears largely to be a hagiographic account of a "great missionary". It is somewhat surprising that until now no scientific biography has been written of the missionary pioneer.
The conclusion is that the question of how the ideal of Einzelbekehrung influenced the concrete work of the first RMG missionaries and especially Nommensen has been overlooked. In this context, it is not possible for me to enter into a deeper discussion of this subject. My aim here is simply to hint at a few lines of reasoning that could be developed in later research.

One characteristic of Nommensen's work that is often related is his eagerness to steadily lead the mission into new territories. In 1885, when the mission was reaching into the area around Lake Toba, he transferred his headquarters from the Silindung Valley. First he moved to Laguboti and in 1888 to Sigumpar on the south-eastern shore of the lake, where he died in 1918.166 This pattern does not, as Beyerhaus thought, imply a wish to convert a whole people but is perfectly compatible with the ideal of converting only individuals. In this case, Nommensen's strategy was presumably that once he had founded congregations in one region, he continued into new areas. In the Silindung Valley “the elect” had already been gathered. From his base in the Toba region, he would therefore lead the efforts to gather the elect in that area. When the mission expanded into the Simalungun area during the first decade of the 20th century, Nommensen was in his late 60s and early 70s. He did not move his headquarters but continued to be involved in the new area, presumably in order to gather the elect in this region too.167

Regarding Nommensen's views of Toba culture and its connection with his theology, there are some interesting dynamics. With the help of the colonial authorities, RMG missionaries tried to eradicate or modify certain cultural and religious practices. These efforts were certainly in line with Fabri's stress on the civilising mission of the West. On the other hand, they were clearly counteracted by the strong emphasis on a positive evaluation of adat. This line of reasoning points to the influence of Wallman, for whom an essential idea was that converts should not become isolated from their own culture in attempts to make them more western.168 Before Nommensen was formally accepted as a student at the RMG seminary, he regularly attended Wallman's lectures. The mission leader also invited him to his home, where Nommensen would be given assignments.169 One can assume that the aspiring missionary candidate on these occasions was influenced by the

167 The expansion of the mission in Simalungun will be discussed in the next chapter.
168 For a discussion of Wallman's and Fabri's view on the culture of the new converts, see section “Einzelbekehrung und Volkschristianizierung in the RMG mission on Sumatra”.
169 Lehmann 1996, pp. 34ff. Warneck 1919, pp. 13ff. Curiously enough I have not been able to find this connection between Wallman and Nommensen in Schreiner 1972. Schreiner points out only that Wallman was formally the teacher of only one RMG missionary to Sumatra, Klammer, and refers to Wallman's general influence over the missionary candidates. Schreiner 1972, p. 34.
missiology of the mission leader. For both Wallman and Nommensen there was no contradiction between a positive evaluation of culture and their ideal of converting individuals. One should, in other words, not overemphasize the impact of Fabri’s theology on Nommensen’s thought, as Hoekendijk does, but count on other influences as well.

With regard to the ideal of Volkschristianizierung, it is important to assess how it was introduced on Sumatra and the relation between missionary praxis on Sumatra and Gustav Warneck’s theory of mission.

Warneck’s best-known work is his Evangelische Missionslehre published in five volumes between 1897 and 1903. His opinion that the goal of mission was to convert the peoples, not as individuals but as whole units, was, however, clearly expressed in programmatic form already in the first issue of his Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift, which he launched in 1874, the year he left the service of the RMG.¹⁷⁰ In that year, the RMG had already worked for 10 years on Sumatra.

Several researchers have highlighted the close relation between Gustav Warneck and the Batak mission. In 1872, while Warneck was still employed by the RMG, he published a booklet about the RMG Sumatra mission.¹⁷¹ After he retired from his position in the RMG, he often wrote articles and editorials focusing on this specific mission. His involvement also had the effect that his son, Johannes Warneck, from 1893 worked as a RMG missionary on Sumatra. This connection made Warneck especially attached to the RMG Batak mission.¹⁷²

With regard to the significant role that missionary praxis played in Gustav Warneck’s theology, it is natural to assume that the Batak mission was important when he developed his theology of mission. According to Beyerhaus, the mission functioned as Warneck’s own “model” (Leitbild) when he developed his thought. He was in a continuous dialogue with the missionaries on Sumatra.¹⁷³ However, Beyerhaus

¹⁷⁰ Warneck 1874, especially pp. 137ff. See also Teinonen 1959, pp. 184ff, 254f, where he refers to the same article.
¹⁷¹ The booklet was called Nacht und Morgen auf Sumatra (Night and Morning in Sumatra).
¹⁷³ Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 78f. This idea that the Batak mission provided a Leitbild for Warneck was originally launched by J. Dürr in his dissertation on Warneck’s theology of mission. See Dürr 1946, pp. 227ff.
does not analyse any details of this interaction, in order to discuss the precise role of the RMG mission on Sumatra in Warneck’s theoretical development.¹⁷⁴

Concerning the introduction of Warneck’s ideas on Sumatra, Schreiner claims that they began to influence the mission only in the late 1880s. It was a result of the impact of Shreiber, the former Sumatra missionary who became leader of the Society in 1889. He accepted Warneck’s model and it was based on his knowledge that the mission among the Toba used the structure of social institutions to convert individuals. The influence of Warneck’s theology increased further when his son started to work for RMG Batak mission, soon to become one of the leading missionaries.¹⁷⁵

Aritonang asserts that the missionaries as early as the late 1860s began to realise that the Toba could not be separated from their community as individuals. Instead, they had to be won as groups, as marga and villages. In order to implement the policy, congregational boundaries were made to conform to the boundaries of the marga.¹⁷⁶ Nommensen’s close co-operation with a growing group of raja must have been the foundation of this change. According to Aritonang, the development implied a shift from Einzelbekehrung to Volkschristianizierung that increased in strength from the late 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s. Somewhat later, the term Volkschristianizierung began to appear in missionary reports.¹⁷⁷ Aritonang suggests that missionaries reported back the change from individual conversion to the conversion of collective groups to the mission. Gustav Warneck then integrated these experiences in his theology of mission, a theology that was later brought back to Sumatra.¹⁷⁸ In other words, the development of Warneck’s theology of mission was to a large extent conditioned by missionary practice on Sumatra.

Both Shriner and Aritonang base their conclusions on a general extensive reading of RMG documents and publications, but no references to such documents are made in their discussions of this development.¹⁷⁹ Despite this short-

¹⁷⁴ The same criticism applies to Dürr, who discusses his idea of the Batak mission as a Leitbild very late in his work. He claims that Warneck was influenced by the forceful leadership of Nommensen and his striving to make the mission independent. To substantiate his argument, he refers, not to the German missiologist himself, but to one of Johannes Warneck’s books about the Batak mission. See Dürr 1946, pp. 228f. Kasdorf has also taken up this point and, in a footnote, said that it would probably be rewarding to study the correspondence between Gustav Warneck and his son, Kasdorf 1990, pp. 98f, 352. As the other authors, Kasdorf’s analysis of Warneck’s ideal of Volkschristianizierung is devoid of a discussion of when and how it developed. See Kasdorf 1990, pp. 253ff.

¹⁷⁵ Shriner 1972, pp. 78f.

¹⁷⁶ Aritonang 1994, p. 175.

¹⁷⁷ Aritonang 1994, p. 175.

¹⁷⁸ Aritonang 1994, p. 89.

¹⁷⁹ This is the case not only in Aritonang 1994, p. 89, but also in the first edition of his dissertation, Aritonang 1987, pp. 123, 222f.
coming, they appear to agree that it was only in the late 1880s that the new ideal started to affect the missionaries in a conscious way. They also more or less suggest that the early missionaries were suffering from cognitive dissonance. The missionary ideal they cherished and continued to adhere to was contradicted by the collective way in which the Toba were actually converted to Christianity and the missionary practice the mission developed.

From the above discussion, it should be clear that there are at least two interconnected issues that deserve further research. Both relate to the general issue of the interaction between missionary ideals and practice.

The first is the interaction between Gustav Warneck’s theology of mission and the RMG mission on Sumatra. It would be worthwhile to study in detail Warneck’s contacts with missionaries on Sumatra and what kind of impulses he received from them, especially regarding the conversion of complete groups to Christianity.

The second is related to how Pietistic missionaries such as Nommensen interpreted a situation in which those who converted did so not primarily as individuals but as groups. Were the missionaries actually suffering from cognitive dissonance or did they find ways of reconciling ideals and reality? How did the Pietistic missionaries react when the new missionary ideal was introduced? It would, for instance, be interesting to study how Schreiber and Nommensen communicated when Schreiber, a former missionary on Sumatra, had become Director in Germany and a strong supporter of Warneck’s ideas.

Despite the fact that more research is needed about the introduction of Volkschristianizierung into Sumatra, it is apparent that with time it became the dominating missionary ideal among RMG missionaries on Sumatra. It was to remain so until the end of RMG activities on Sumatra in 1942 and is a very common explicit feature or implicit presupposition in RMG documents. However, this general perspective does not imply that all missionaries adhered to this ideal. Some kept a more traditional Pietistic outlook that would occasionally make them moderately critical of some effects of Volkschristianizierung. With regard to the minority of non-German missionaries, one would also expect other influences. The largest and most influential group among them consisted of Dutch males, but, in view of the strong and similar tradition in the Netherlands, many of them appear to have shared the basic perspective of most of their German colleagues.

The exception to the general strategy of Volkschristianizierung was the area around Sipirok, where the mission started. In this region, the Christians remained a minority and the missionaries never adopted the ideal of Volkschristianizierung. In

---

180 For two examples, see Aritonang 1994, p. 176.
181 Schreiner 1972, p. 79.
an area where the majority of the population had converted to Islam, there were simply no real prospects of founding a Church encompassing the whole population. In the north, on the other hand, the strategy was viable and was to have a strong impact. The remainder of this section will deal with various aspects of this strategy.

When the RMG missionaries started to implement the strategy of converting the whole people, their attitude to conversion had to be changed. During the first phase of the mission, the missionaries accepted people for baptism only when they were thought to have a personal faith and enough knowledge of that faith. But, in order to convert a whole people, the missionaries had to accept that people might be admitted for baptism before they met the standards used previously. To meet the wishes of the Toba who wanted to convert, the mission arranged mass baptisms. The local community frequently let the missionaries know that, if the mission did not accept this form of baptism, they would instead convert to another religion. The result was that many converts did not have any knowledge of their new faith. But the missionaries thought that it was better to baptise first and to educate the converts properly later, in order to build up their Christian faith.\(^\text{182}\)

In order to apply the strategy of \textit{Volkschristianizierung}, it was necessary to have a group of people recognised as a \textit{Volk}. In the culture of the coastal Malays, the term “Batak” referred to the non-Muslim peoples in the interior of the island. If a group of Batak converted to Islam, they were no longer regarded as “Batak”, but as “highland Malays” (\textit{Melays Dusun}).\(^\text{183}\) The Malay concept was fluid, because it was intimately connected with their own cultural expansion implied in the process of Malayisation. The German missionaries took up the term “Batak”, but it was now interpreted in accordance with the \textit{Volk} concept of German Romanticism, not the fluid concept of the Malays. The Batak were generally recognised as a \textit{Volk}, which implied that they were thought to be a group with a basically homogeneous culture organically bound to a specific geographical territory, their “homeland”. Even though the first missionaries did not want to make the Batak into Christians as a \textit{Volk}, the Batak were recognised as such.\(^\text{184}\) It was only in the late 1880s that the Batak as a \textit{Volk} were made a constituting principle in missionary work.

\(^\text{182}\) Warneck 1925, pp. 7f, 86f. Aritonang 1994, pp. 175f.
\(^\text{183}\) For this usage, see Pelly 1983, pp. 77f.
\(^\text{184}\) Personal communication from Prof. Lothar Schreiner.
\(^\text{185}\) See, for instance, Warneck 1925, p. 13.
One important limitation in this line of reasoning is that the missionaries included also the Batak groups in the south in the Batak Volk. Their conversion to Islam implied, however, that in practice they were not included when the RMG missionaries envisioned the goal of their missionary endeavours.

One aspect of the German concept was that the Volk was intrinsically bound to a specific geographical area. The implication was that the People's Church should be built in, and limited to, a specific territory. In this case, missionary theory was underpinned by other factors contributing to the confinement of the mission to a specific territory. To expand further was difficult, because of the expansion of Islam, the relatively limited resources of the mission and the general lack of communications. The comity policy was obviously important in this context, but, on the other hand, the borders of the comity area might have been changed, had the RMG decided to extend its activities.

In relation to these limiting factors, it is, on the other hand, important to note that the Volk concept of the missionaries remained as an element when it became easier to travel and many Toba migrated to other parts of the Dutch colony during the first decades of the 20th century. In this situation missionaries openly opposed Toba migration and made serious efforts to make them stay at home. The general attitude of the RMG missionaries was that they wanted as little interference from others as possible in their work of implementing the strategy of Volkschristianisierung. It was taken for granted that the colonial government would uphold "law and order" but generally the missionaries were suspicious of or outright hostile to all outside involvement in Toba society, except for their own.

A basic element in Gustav Warneck's theology of missions was that the People's Church should be based on the unique cultural characteristics (Volkstum) of the people in question. This implied that elements that were not deemed to be in conflict with the Gospel were regarded as a foundation upon which the Church should be built. In the case of the RMG mission on Sumatra, the new ideal was introduced in an environment in which Wallman's culturally sensitive Pietism was an important factor shaping missionary attitudes.

Missionaries were in general convinced that modern western culture was intrinsically secular and, in spite of their own obvious impact on Toba culture, wanted to keep the Toba rooted in their own culture, and not westernise them. In one passage, Johannes Warneck ridiculed the Toba who, as a consequence of their travels, had adopted parts of western culture and continued:

---

186 Several examples of this attitude will be highlighted in the following chapters.

The mission has always insisted that its Christians should keep their specific customs. They should, for instance, not wear shoes, a habit not necessary in the Tropics, not use European clothing and not sit on chairs eating with knives and forks. This goes beyond their resources and inner journey.¹⁸⁸

When the RMG missionaries evaluated Toba culture, they used a distinction in principle between *adat* and “heathenism”. This was made despite the fact that Toba society did not have any strict boundaries between religion and culture.¹⁸⁹ While traditional religion should be eradicated, *adat* was accepted as a “preparation for the Gospel” (*preparatio evangelica*). It should be preserved and purified within a Christian context.¹⁹⁰

With regard to the social and political structure of Toba society, I have already highlighted the important role of the *ruja* when the mission was built up. The RMG missionaries also quickly realised the importance of the genealogical structure and tried to use it to their advantage. The boundaries of the first four congregations in Silindung were determined on the basis of the local, dominating *marga*. The closely related clans Simanungkalit, Situmeang and Hutauruk, for instance, dominated the Sipoholon congregation. In this way, *marga* and congregational membership were closely related. When the mission extended its territory, the same pattern was repeated over and over again. Where churches were built close to each other, the local *marga* divided themselves between the churches in order to dominate one each.¹⁹¹

The exogamous *marga* system remained intact also within the framework of the Church. The missionaries supported the social structure and ruled that also Christians were forbidden to marry within their *marga*.¹⁹²

The Toba Batak language was regarded as an important pillar in the Church, intimately connected with the identity of Church and people.¹⁹³ Services were naturally held in Toba Batak and Nommensen completed the translation of the New Testament in 1876. The translation of the Old Testament was finished in 1891. RMG missionaries translated not only Christian literature, but also collected proverbs and folk tales. To produce literature was seen as a means of purifying and preserving the cultural heritage of the people.¹⁹⁴

Polygamy was condemned as contrary to Christian ethics and forbidden to Christians. However, its strong position had the effect that it became one of the most common “offences” in North Tapanuli.¹⁹⁵ Many men obviously preferred...

¹⁸⁸ Shreiner 1972, pp. 133, 139.
¹⁸⁹ Shreiner 1972, p. 132.
¹⁹⁰ Shreiner 1972, p. 120. Lumbantobing 1961, p. 39.
¹⁹¹ Shreiner 1972, p. 140.
¹⁹² Shreiner 1972, p. 130f.
¹⁹⁴ Aritonang 1994, pp. 130f.
¹⁹⁵ Castles 1972, p. 151.
to undergo Church discipline rather than abstain from taking a second wife. On the other hand, polygamous men who converted did not have to divorce their wives. Warneck underlined that these marriages were legal and honourable. The practice of accepting polygamous men into the Church could, according to him, be justifiable because it conformed with the marriage pattern of leading men in the Old Testament. Warneck’s “liberalism” was in this case most likely conditioned by the fact that the raja, whose support the mission needed, were in many cases polygamous. An old woman once told me that her father-in-law, who was a wealthy man, was able to keep his two wives because he frequently donated money to the Church.

Some cultural elements were regarded as “strange” or “unsound”, but difficult to abolish quickly. The bride price, for instance, was regarded as contradictory to Christian marriage ideals. But the importance of this tradition meant that it was practised also after the conversion to Christianity. In this context, Warneck again points out that after all the Toba shared the custom with the ancient Israelites.

While the missionaries worked out how they should relate to various aspects of adat, the Toba actively appropriated Christianity into their world-view. One example is the cadre of evangelists who integrated Toba images and umpama (sayings) into their propaganda. Thereby they could show that Christianity was not a foreign religion but had already been accepted and appropriated by their own folk. The use of these traditional means of communicating wisdom also had a deeper meaning. Umpama were traditionally applied to codify adat. The act of using them in Christian evangelism implied that the true meaning of adat, the revered tradition structuring the whole cosmos, was coherent with the Christian message.

In a culture in which ancestors played an important role, it was natural that Christians should try to connect their reverence for their forefathers with the Christian message. With regard to the forefathers, Toba Christians continued with traditional burials, but a cross was now put on top of the charnel houses. Toba Christians also developed the tradition of celebrating Easter morning in the graveyards.

---

196 According to Vergouwen, “A Batak would rather break his external link with the Church than die without male issue.” Vergouwen 1964, p. 104.
197 Warneck 1925, pp. 99f.
198 For a short description of polygamy by Warneck, see Warneck 1909, p. 116.
199 Interview, nyonya Tampubolon boru Hutagaol (b 1909).
200 Warneck 1925, p. 99.
201 Beyehaus 1956, pp. 168f.
202 See, for instance, the mausoleum (tugu) of the Silalahi margo in Lechner-Knecht 1986, p. 167.
203 Warneck 1912, p. 262.
The RMG missionaries regarded the Toba notion of God (Mula jadi na Bolon) as preparatio evangelica. But, in translating “God” (Gott) into Toba Batak, they choose not Mula jadi na Bolon, but Debata. The concept was used in relation to the three gods under Mula jadi na Bolon and was regarded by the missionaries as a more general concept of God. It is difficult to say how the Toba perceived this use of the concept, but it can be assumed that there was continuity between the traditional and the Christian concept of God.

The Toba generally interpreted the Church as a sabala organisation in which divine power was distributed. To take part in the God-given sabala of the Church had the effect that the rites were often interpreted according to magical concepts. It implied that sabala was transferred in a very concrete way during the rites in the Church and was also inherent in the robe of the minister. Christian texts could be regarded as possessing power and could, for instance, be used as amulets or tied to the head of a sick person as a remedy. Christians continued to visit the datu (traditional healer), and, when a datu converted to the new religion, he would frequently not destroy his utensils, but give them to someone who had not yet converted.

Many Christians continued to hold Singamangaraja in high esteem and to regard him as having supernatural qualities. To what extent the continued reverence for Singamangaraja among Toba Christians implied a support for his political struggle is uncertain. Some Christians, who had been involved with the “priest-king” before conversion, continued to remain in contact with him. It is likely that they supported his struggle against Dutch colonisation or adopted the more moderate stand that he should remain a political leader under Dutch supremacy.

Education as the main tool of progress

From the start of the RMG mission on Sumatra, general education was an important concern. At first, it was regarded as one of the main tools of evangelisation. When large numbers of Toba became Christian, the role of the schools changed. Instead the mission stressed that the goal of education was to build up the Chris-

204 Shreiner 1972, p. 132.
205 For the missionary interpretation of the concept of Debata, see Warneck 1909, p. 116.
207 Warneck 1925, pp. 240f.
208 Warneck 1925, p. 128.
209 In this case, Warneck is silent on a matter which would have complicated his view of Singamangaraja as the main enemy of the mission.
210 The father of the future political activist Manullang is the only example I have come across, Castles 1972, p. 144. But it is likely that there are many more.
The most important mission schools were the primary schools, which spread out in a fine network in the areas of Tapanuli where the RMG worked. At the beginning of the century, there were 200 schools for the 300,000 Toba living in North Tapanuli. For comparison, the 28 million people on Java had access to only 562 schools. The Toba had, in other words, a clear advantage regarding access to education, compared with other areas of the Dutch colony.

The Toba were eager to make use of the new opportunity. They realised that schooling could lead to employment by the mission or in the colonial administration. When they converted they soon started to build a school and demanded that they too should receive teachers. The eagerness with which the Toba wanted schooling for their children meant that by the end of the 19th century they had established a strong tradition of education.

The colonial government extended the state schools into North Tapanuli only to a small extent. Instead, it supported the educational endeavours of the mission and provided generous subsidies for teachers' salaries and the construction of schools. The RMG was willing to adapt its educational system in order to receive subsidies. On the other hand, the missionaries fiercely defended its independence when they thought that it was threatened.

During the early part of the 20th century, the so-called hamajuon movement for progress had the effect that the RMG had to relate itself to new demands for more qualified education. The term hamajuon was constructed from the Malay word maju (to progress) and came into use at the beginning of the 20th century. The fact that the word was coined from Malay suggests that progress was connected with the Malay-speaking areas that surrounded the Toba homeland. The idea of progress included the notion that Tapanuli was a backward society and that the Toba needed to go forward to modernise health, culture, economy and education. The result of this attitude was that the Toba frequently approached

---

212 Dahm 1971, p. 16.
213 Aritonang 1994, pp. 166f.
214 In North Tapanuli, one of the few examples is the Standard Schools using Malay that the government opened in 1915 in Tarutung and Baige. Aritonang 1994, p. 169.
216 The word maju is not included in Warneck's Toba-batak Deutsches Wörterbuch of 1906. In his dictionary, Warneck included many other loan words from Malay, which shows that he was no purist when it came to using Malay loan-words in the Toba Batak language and thus would have included maju, had the word been in frequent use.
missionaries and requested that schools providing education in Dutch or Malay should be organised near their village. Education in English was also attractive, which can be explained by the strong presence of American and British companies established both on Sumatra and in nearby, British-ruled Malaya.

In the missionary perspective, these demands were generally not appealing, because the idea of a purified language was one pillar of the RMG ideal of the Batak People’s Church. More specifically, the missionaries were suspicious about education in Dutch and Malay. The Dutch educational system at the time adopted a neutral position to religion and did not teach it in schools. Because of their general suspicion of “modern secularism,” missionaries thought that Dutch education would endanger the religious faith of their new converts. The RMG was even more hostile towards education in Malay because of its connections with the Muslim culture of the east coast. Malay was thought to be infused with Islamic ideas and Toba children who learned the language would be in danger of converting to Islam.

Eventually, missionaries realised that they would have to adapt to the new situation. If they could not provide the desired kind of education in Tapanuli, parents would send children outside Tapanuli, or even migrate themselves, in order to obtain the education they required. This development was well under way during the early decades of the century. It is demonstrated by the fact that in 1915 85% of the pupils at the ELS (Dutch elementary school) in Sibolga on the coast west of Tapanuli were Toba. Parents had also started to send boys to Medan and some even to Java. The RMG missionaries reached the conclusion that it would be advantageous if the mission were to educate Toba officials, so that they at least had some roots in Christianity, instead of the “secularism” of the Dutch State schools.

---

218 Aritonang 1994, pp. 166ff, 229ff.
219 The importance of these contacts is demonstrated by the history of the Methodist and Adventist missions in northern Sumatra. They both reached Sumatra by way of the Malacca peninsula. One main reason why the Toba became interested in these missions was that they provided education in English. I shall refer to these missions in Chapters 4 and 5.
221 Aritonang 1994, pp. 256ff.
224 Aritonang 1994, p. 167, n. 36. Because Aritonang does not specify on what conditions these Toba were admitted, it is difficult to find out how it happened that they were able to dominate in this school.
The RMG also feared that Toba en masse would join other mission organisations, for instance, those that had been established in Medan, to satisfy their hunger for education. This insight led the RMG to start to give in to the Toba demands and begin to include other languages than Toba Batak in its schools. In 1908, missionaries gave courses in Dutch to pupils who wanted to continue their education after primary school. The language was also taught by a Dutch missionary at the RMG teachers’ seminary in Narumonda. His explicit motivation was to prevent young men from leaving their home area. Regarding the other seminaries, it is not clear whether Dutch was included in the curriculum.

Dutch schools were founded by the RMG in Sigompulon near Tarutung in 1910 and in Sidikalang in 1911, the latter school being exclusively for children of raja who had official positions in relation to the Dutch. It was not until 1919 that a “normal” HIS started at Narumonda, to be followed by a HIS in Pematang Siantar in 1923. In 1927, the first MULO of the region began in Tarutung. In the 1930s, other schools of the same kind followed.

The RMG was less interested in providing courses in Malay. The language was, however, taught at the seminaries at Pansur na Pintu and Sipoholon. Malay could also be studied in schools near large congregations. Education in Dutch was seen in the Toba community as more prestigious than education in Malay and in time to a large extent replaced it.

HIS schools were aimed at a small elite, and on Java it was self-evident that the elite would be children of the Javanese aristocracy (Prijay). On the “outer islands” social and political structures were not the same and the definition of the

---

227 Aritonang 1994, pp. 204ff. Regarding the introduction of Dutch at the seminaries in Pansur na Pintu and Sipoholon, Aritonang says that the missionaries agreed that they would include Dutch in the curriculum, Aritonang 1994, p. 204, but, on the other hand, that they later debated whether they should do so, Aritonang 1994, p. 206. I assume that the uneasiness of the missionaries was the result of the tension between the Dutch and German missionaries, when Dutch missionaries were anxious to introduce their mother tongue into schools.

228 The school in Sigompulon was originally intended by the government to be used for the same purpose, but the RMG managed to change that aim. Aritonang 1994, pp. 168, 171.

229 HIS were started in Sibolga in 1934, at Padang Sidempuan in 1935, at Sinsim in 1937 and at Sipirok in 1938, and schakelschools (connecting schools) at Simorangkir in 1931, at Pematang Siantar in 1931 and at Pematang Raya in 1933. Aritonang 1994, p. 288.

230 Curricula are listed in Aritonang 1994, pp. 197ff, 203. Aritonang does not explain why Malay, which was thought to be a “dangerous” language, was included in curricula, while the introduction of Dutch was somewhat controversial.

231 Aritonang 1994, p. 168. It is uncertain what Aritonang’s text implies, i.e. whether congregations with more resources started schools in which Malay was used, or whether the mission selected a group of congregations who were thought to be worthy of such schools.

232 Aritonang 1994, p. 16.
elite had to be adapted to these conditions. In Tapanuli, those who had access to
the Dutch education system were children of local government officials, minis-
ters, mission teachers or wealthy families who could lend fl. 200 to the mission.233

Aritonang does not discuss how the process of defining these conditions took
place, but it can be assumed that the mission and the government negotiated in order
to determine who should have access to HIS in North Tapanuli. It is nevertheless
apparent that the strong position of the RMG is reflected in the regulations.

The purpose of the mission in providing this benefit for Toba co-workers
might have been to secure the recruitment of clergy and teachers. The opportu-
nity to lend the mission fl. 200 in order to gain access to Dutch schools obviously
reflects the efforts of the RMG to remedy the difficult economic situation that
the mission faced after the First World War. On the other hand, it was a large sum
and reflected the policy of the mission in restricting the number of students in its
Dutch schools.234

I have no definite information regarding the age of the students in regular
primary schools and HIS. At least during the beginning of the RMG's educational
effort, primary schools had no fixed classes. Pupils left school when they were
thought to be mature enough, intellectually and spiritually.235 I assume that the
interest of the colonial government in regulating education, especially HIS schools,
implied that children would enter at a fixed age, probably 7 or 8 years. In Tapanuli,
it is, however, not certain that these regulations could be acted on. It is uncertain
whether all Toba at the turn of the century knew their exact ages. The fact that
children would in some cases remove to a more prestigious school also implied
that the age when they entered HIS was not fixed. It is, on the other hand, likely
that most school-leavers, after seven years of schooling, were in their middle
teens, some a few years older.

At the turn of the century, the RMG also initiated more practical education,
such as industrial schools (Industrieschulen) and schools for artisans and workmen
(Sikola Hapandean). The most important was the Industrieschule in Narumonda,
which started in 1900 and moved to Laguboti in 1907.236

In the Toba community, education was to a very large extent a male venture.
Initially, there were only boys in the RMG schools. Not until 1873 were girls sent
to school. Even though the mission encouraged parents to send girls, most of

233 For these stipulations, see Aritonang 1994, p. 289.
234 Raja are not mentioned in this context. Most of them were probably able to raise fl. 200, but it is
also possible that, because of their general authority, they could get their children into the HIS anyway.
235 Aritonang 1994, p. 125. Otherwise, Aritonang is silent on the matter.
236 Aritonang 1994, pp. 172f.
them were not willing to do so. Girls had a lower status in society and helped to work in the fields. They were not given the opportunity to advance by means of education. In 1914, there were 26,000 boys in the elementary schools but only 6,000 girls. The mission regarded these conditions as a problem, and the first effort by the RMG to remedy male dominance in education was when two missionary wives in 1874 started a primary school exclusively for girls. They taught practical subjects related to the care of the home, and skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

Education for women expanded further only with the arrival of women missionaries from 1890 onwards. These efforts were clearly supported by the RMG leadership in Germany, where Inspector Schreiber gave much attention to the education of girls and encouraged the idea of sending out women missionaries. Women missionaries started elementary schools for girls but also initiated more advanced education, such as schools for nurses and midwives. In 1903, courses for midwives started in Pearaja and in 1914 in Nainggolan on the island of Samosir. A weaving school operated from 1913 in Pearaja and Laguboti with the stated purpose of developing the financial contribution of women to the household, as well as of conserving and developing traditional Toba dress.

After 1914, the increased opportunities of obtaining state subsidies for schools implied that education for women expanded. The number of women in regular primary schools increased, as did the opportunities for them to enter HIS or MULO schools. The special schools for women were also generally upgraded. In Tarutung and Balige, schools for nurses and midwives began. They provided a three-year secondary education. Certain primary schools for girls were also upgraded to become four- or six-year schools of home economics, while others became standard schools for girls (Meisjesstandaardschool). Some schools saw it as their duty to educate “skilled Christian mothers, who would become models of cleanliness, orderliness and piety.” Other schools had a more theoretical emphasis and taught Malay and Dutch.

---

239 Aritonang 1994, p. 126.
Implementation of the Three Selves formula

An important ideal that the RMG mission adhered to was the Three Selves formula. It implied that the goal of the mission was to found an autonomous Church that would be self-supportive, self-governed and self-propagating. The actual implementation of the ideal on North Sumatra was not a simple matter of missionaries putting ideas into practice. The process was conditioned by the general development of the mission, and especially by Toba demands and criticism of missionaries for not giving them enough influence. These voices were heard particularly from the beginning of the 20th century. It is therefore impossible to separate missionary strategy from the Toba perceptions of the mission and their demands with regard to its structure.

The scholarly analysis of the RMG mission on Sumatra has given due attention to Toba demands and perceptions. But the precise issue of how the missionaries promoted the Three Selves formula among the Toba has not been studied properly. It is therefore not generally discussed how the Toba integrated the formula into their own perception of the mission and whether demands were consciously motivated with reference to this ideal. Bearing in mind the lack of studies in this field, I assume that the Toba in many cases consciously used missionary rhetoric to their own advantage, in order to make the missionaries actually implement the ideals that they theoretically adhered to. Some concrete examples will be given in the following discussion.

A self-supporting Church

*Educating indigenous co-workers.* In order for the mission to become self-supporting in terms of personnel, the RMG from the start made efforts to educate indigenous teachers and clergy. Even before he had entered the Silindung Valley, Nommensen argued that indigenous Christian teachers should be educated, because he thought that it was easier for them than for foreign missionaries to reach their people. Teachers took care of the main work in congregations,

---

244 A study such as this could be made, for instance, using the Church paper *Immanuel* as the main source. Aritonang makes only the general statement that the missionaries often stressed the Three Selves formula, Aritonang 1994, p. 177, but how and in what context is not explicitly dealt with.
and they had the dual function of preaching in church and teaching in school. They were therefore called “teacher-preachers” (guru-huria).246

Teacher education started in the Sipirok area at the Parausorat Catechetical School in 1868. The school used the Ankola Batak language. The steady expansion of the mission in the north implied that more and more Toba entered the seminary and the RMG drew the conclusion that the education of teachers should also take place where the mission was expanding steadily. Teacher education was therefore launched in the Silindung Valley in 1874 as an emergency effort. The seminary was called “the Walking School” (Sikola Mardalan-dalan), because students had to move between three mission stations each week to be taught by the missionaries. In 1877, the missionaries decided to abandon the school and to start a seminary in Pansur na Pintu near Tarutung. The language of instruction was Toba Batak and the teacher was the well-known missionary Johannsen.247 In the process, the Parausorat seminary was abolished and its students transferred to Pansur na Pintu.248 In 1900, the seminary moved again, this time to Sipoholon, north of Tarutung. The expansion in the area around Lake Toba had the effect that another seminary was initiated. In Narumonda, in the eastern part of the district, a seminary started in 1905 and continued to educate teachers until 1919.249

In addition to its own seminaries on Sumatra, the RMG was also able to send students to the Depok teachers’ seminary near Jakarta on Java. This was founded in 1878 by the Protestantsche Kerk.250 The seminary provided a two-year teacher-training that was added to the two years of training that students had already completed.251 The language of instruction was Malay, the lingua franca in many parts of the archipelago.252

Even when it was initiated, the seminary had close contacts with the RMG. Its rector from 1878 to 1905, J. Henneman, had originally worked for the RMG on Borneo, and Johannsen worked there for some years. The generous financial basis of the seminary provided the basic motive for the RMG to send students to Java. The seminary paid all student expenses, including the costs to travel to Java. In all, 67 Christian Batak were educated as teachers in Depok, most of them before 1900.253

246 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 171f. Aritonang 1994, pp. 146f, goes into more detail about the duties and workload of the teachers.
247 Initially, 15 students were admitted, but during the first two years the school had neither a dormitory nor a school building. Two students died before they could graduate.
249 Aritonang 1994, pp. 189ff, 263.
251 End 1989, p. 351.
252 That Malay was used is implied in Aritonang 1994, pp. 144f., n. 76.
253 Aritonang 1994, pp. 144f., including n. 77.
From the turn of the century, the RMG missionaries became critical of the seminary and decided not to send students to Depok, other than a few, particularly talented and poor ones. The problem at the seminary, according to the RMG missionaries, was that it alienated students from their homeland and that it was under Roman Catholic influence.\textsuperscript{254}

With regard to the indigenous clergy, the RMG from the start intended to educate and ordain suitable men to become ministers (pandita). It was, however, only in the 1880s that these plans were implemented.\textsuperscript{255} It is likely that the delay was connected with the view that candidates for the ministry had to have worked for a long time in the Church to be “mature enough”. The standard of maturity was set by the missionaries themselves, influenced by the idea of the superiority of western peoples.\textsuperscript{256}

The Church order of 1881 stipulated that a teacher who had worked for several years in a congregation and was recommended by a missionary could be selected for ordination. The candidate had to take several special courses held at the Sipoholon seminary. The education of ministers was not copied from similar education in Germany but targeted at the practical needs and conditions of the Batak Church. The first three ministers started their education in 1884 and were, after one and a half years of study, ordained in 1885. Their duty was to be responsible for a local congregation and to administer the sacraments.\textsuperscript{257}

Compared with the number of teachers, indigenous clergy were few. It was only in the 1920s that their number started to exceed that of ordained European missionaries.\textsuperscript{258} In this respect, the ideal of the Three Selves formula was not forcefully implemented, mainly because the missionaries thought that it was difficult to find suitable candidates for the priesthood.

Through the education of teachers and clergy, the RMG was able to develop a strong cadre of local co-workers. The mission was centred on the mission stations where each missionary was responsible for one or two Toba ministers and an ever-increasing number of schools and teachers. In the process missionaries became overseers and administrators, while indigenous co-workers took care of most of the local work.

\textsuperscript{254}Aritonang 1994, pp. 191f. The accusation that there were Catholic influences at this Protestant seminary seems quite strange and I suspect that this argument was used to cover financial or organisational conflicts.

\textsuperscript{255} Aritonang 1994, p. 221.

\textsuperscript{256} For the last point, see Castles 1972, pp. 138f.

\textsuperscript{257} Aritonang 1994, pp. 221f. For a summary perspective that differ on minor points from Aritonang’s more detailed discussion, see Beyerhaus 1956, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{258} See the statistics in Aritonang 1994, p. 302.
The indigenous employees of the RMG were regularly gathered together for large conferences, where common issues were discussed and missionaries laid down disciplinary rules. These occasions enabled the missionaries to keep in touch with and try to control the endeavours of their local co-workers. But, for teachers and clergy, these meetings were also a means of assessing their common interests and forming bonds between different villages and regions.

**Toba Batak financial support and RMG crisis.** With regard to finance, the RMG encouraged the converts to contribute money to the mission, in order to make it self-sufficient. They found that the Toba were very willing to do so if they thought that it served their interests. Ever since the Toba started to convert to Christianity, they had contributed most substantially to the Church. In most cases, they sponsored church buildings and schools, as well as contributing to the salaries of ministers and teachers. The result was that the local community felt strongly that the church or school belonged to them and took responsibility for their own congregation. According to a Dutch observer, the RMG mission had been more able to cultivate a feeling of financial responsibility among its converts than other missions in Indonesia.

The First World War in 1914 had severe effects on the financial situation of the RMG mission, and had a profound impact on the relation between the RMG and the Toba. The outbreak of the war had the effect that contacts between the Dutch East Indies and Germany were broken, entailing for the RMG a severe financial crisis. The war and the chaotic economy in Germany also led to the central board of the RMG in Barmen experiencing a financial crisis, a crisis that still affected their work on Sumatra when contacts were resumed after the war. The Netherlands had, on the other hand, remained neutral during the war and had a better financial standing. When its severe financial problems became known, the Dutch colonial authorities decided to support the RMG. They provided large, long-term loans with a low interest rate to the mission. It was mainly through these loans that the RMG was able to continue its work. These loans were in fact never paid back. The Dutch authorities motivated their action with reference to the important role that the RMG played in Tapanuli, especially through its schools.

---

259 See, for instance, the analysis of the teachers conferences in Aritonang 1994, pp. 150ff.
261 Nyhus 1987, p. 32.
262 Kraemer 1958, p. 50.
The contacts the RMG had developed in the Netherlands meant that Dutch Christians took the initiative in supporting the mission on Sumatra. In 1917, a support committee was formed to raise money for the work of the RMG on Sumatra (Steuncomite voor de Rijnsche Zending in Nederlandsch Oost-Indie). It was led by J. W. Gunning, director of the Dutch Missionary Society.\(^{264}\)

In spite of the financial support from outside, the RMG on Sumatra still had to reduce its expenses. Its main measure was to cut down the number of missionaries. In 1920, there were 73 European missionaries in Tapanuli, 49 of them clergy. Seven years later, the number of clergy had decreased to 27 and the total number of missionaries was 40.\(^{265}\)

In order to solve its financial problems the mission also wanted the Toba to increase their financial support. There were certainly those who realised the difficult situation of the mission and made efforts to contribute. Therefore, collections were started for the daily needs of the schools, and a Committee to support the Barmen Mission (Comite mangurupi Zending Barmen) was set up to send money directly to Germany. The mission tried to increase its income also by raising contributions in local congregations. In 1925, for instance, it was decided that individual congregations would have to send 12% of their income to the central fund of the mission. In 1928, the percentage was raised to 25%. This increase led to protests and most congregations continued to pay 12%.\(^{266}\)

Furthermore, the mission increased the fee for baptism to one Dutch florin. The increased fee was regarded as unfair and missionaries were accused of trying to "sell water". Most Toba had nevertheless no idea of the finances of the mission and were not given financial responsibility.\(^{267}\) One can conclude that the Toba were willing to contribute to Church activities from which they could see that they would benefit but were often opposed to increases from which they could not see immediate results.\(^{268}\)

The financial crisis of the mission also weakened its position in another sense. In the past, the RMG had been regarded as the main sabala organisation in Tapanuli and the crisis after 1914 was therefore seen as something extraordinary. A Toba source, with a critical attitude towards the RMG, says: "Something like that had never happened before."\(^{269}\) The image of the RMG as the great sabala organisation was shaken.\(^{270}\)

\(^{264}\) Aritonang 1994, p. 98.
\(^{265}\) See the statistics in Aritonang 1994, p. 302.
\(^{266}\) Aritonang 1994, pp. 275f.
\(^{267}\) Tampubolon 1976, pp. 16f.
\(^{269}\) "Hal ini menimbulkan sesuatu yang sebelumnya tidak pernah terjadi." Tampubolon 1976, p. 16.
\(^{270}\) Castles 1972, p. 140.
The decreasing number of missionaries was the most obvious sign of the declining strength of the mission. Locally, missionaries were the main token of the presence of the mission. The fact that the Toba could collect money to send to Germany must also have been an important symbolic act that implied the declining prestige of the mission.

There were also other factors that had the effect of causing the prestige of the RMG to decline. The defeat of Germany in World War I meant that the prestige of the missionaries, most of them German citizens, was affected. The death of Nommensen in 1918 was another important factor. Nommensen had worked in Tapanuli for 56 years and as Ephorus he was by far the most respected and honoured missionary. According to Castles, Nommensen "commanded a reverence previously reserved for Singamangaraja". Nommensen's successors did not have the same *sabala* and were unable to command the same respect.

Another factor was that other Christian denominations, such as the Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists and Catholics, attempted to make inroads into Tapanuli. They tried to convert the Toba and started schools along the borders of Tapanuli. The development of communications in general also made the Toba more aware of the world outside and the alternatives it offered. The declining prestige of the missionaries and the awareness of other alternatives made the Toba demand more influence in the mission organisation. They wanted to obtain a larger proportion of the *sabala* that the mission still represented.

**A self-governing Church**

*Missionary authority and the Toba Batak quest for respect*. One central element in Gustav Warneck's interpretation of the Three Selves formula was that indigenous Churches should have autonomy in matters of organisation and doctrinal matters. The RMG mission on Sumatra embodied this ideal. The first Batak Church order of 1881 did not, for instance, mention which Christian denomination the Batak Christians should actually adhere to. The Apostles’ Creed was

---

271 Castles 1972, p. 140.
272 Castles 1972, p. 45.
273 The Toba awarded Nommensen the epithet *Ompu*, which normally refers to a grandfather or ancestor. The title implies that Nommensen had been “adopted” by the Toba to become their grandfather, a forceful image in a society in which male ancestors are very important. Nommensen’s successors were also called *Ompu*, but I have several times heard the opinion that the title was an affectionate epithet for him personally that could not be inherited by others.
275 Castles 1972, p. 140.
thought to be sufficient to emphasise the continuity with the apostolic age and the common Christian heritage.\textsuperscript{276}

Another example of the independent relation to European confessional formulae is Nommensen's translation of Martin Luther's Small Catechism, a classical work in Lutheranism. In his translation, he took the liberty of explaining the commandments in relation to Toba culture. The missionary also arranged the Ten Commandments according to a Reformed tradition that emphasised what God forbids.\textsuperscript{277} In this way, Nommensen was in a sense true to the interdenominational character of the Rhenish mission.

The organisation of the mission was also specific.\textsuperscript{278} In general it was based on prevailing ideas about race in the West and the mistrust of missionaries about giving Toba independent responsibility. The organisation therefore became much more hierarchical than the Churches from which the missionaries themselves came.\textsuperscript{279}

The leader with the title of Ephorus, who, it was taken for granted, would be a missionary, had extensive powers over the mission. He could almost autocratically transfer missionaries and other personnel, even though RMG missionaries had some freedom to negotiate with him.

Every year, a General Synod was held, attended by missionaries, indigenous clergy and a few representatives of elders and teachers. The General Synod was divided into two parts. The Synod Conference (\textit{Synodalkonferenz}), at which the authoritative decisions were made, was attended by male missionaries only and was generally referred to in RMG documents as the annual conference of the missionaries. The conference was followed by the General Proceedings (\textit{Allgemeine Verhandlungen}) that were held in Toba Batak and attended by all delegates. In the districts, biannual district synods were held.\textsuperscript{280}

The next level was the mission stations, followed by individual congregations. On the congregational level, the main body was the elected elders (\textit{sintua}), but raja could also exert a considerable formal and informal influence.\textsuperscript{281} The congregations did not have a representational body, corresponding to the conference of the missionaries, until the Batak Church Synod was founded in 1930.\textsuperscript{282}

From the perspective of European Churches, the organisation was an anomaly. It was a Presbyterian organisation with elders and synods, but with a

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{276} Beyerhaus 1956, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{277} Warneck 1925, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{278} For particulars of the various Church constitutions, see Hutauruk 1980, pp. 111-127.
\textsuperscript{279} Cf. Castles 1972, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{281} About the role of the elders, see Warneck 1925, pp. 89f.
\textsuperscript{282} The Synod will be discussed later in this chapter.
\end{flushright}
strong central leader closely resembling a bishop, but with even greater de facto authority. On the other hand, the organisation embodied Gustav Warneck’s conviction that new Churches should not copy their organisation from the West.

With regard to the transfer of actual authority to their co-workers, the RMG missionaries were generally hesitant. In this respect, the mission followed the approach of Gustav Warneck, which was adhered to by his son Johannes, rather than Schreiber’s, which stressed the need to quickly develop responsible indigenous leaders. When demands were raised for more influence, missionaries stressed that an autonomous Batak Church was indeed independent but only in a spiritual way. They argued, in other words, that the organizational and doctrinal autonomy of the mission amounted only to a spiritual independence and could be separated from giving more actual power to the new converts themselves.

The unwillingness of missionaries to give more responsibilities to the Toba was interpreted as missionary jealousy, which sought to keep the inherent saba’a of the mission restricted mainly to missionaries only.

The problem of influence over the mission was especially relevant for teachers and ministers. The teachers who did most of the work of the local congregations carried a heavy workload. On the other hand, they had little influence over how the work was conducted. They were clearly subordinate to the Toba clergy and the RMG missionaries.

In the mid-1920s, government efforts to standardise primary education had the effect that the number of mission schools was reduced from 500 to 300. In the process, many teachers were dismissed. The ex-teachers often became bitter towards the mission, for which they had worked vigorously. Teachers who remained within the structure had to work harder than before and often thought that they had not enough time for their responsibilities to the congregation. A further reason for discontent among them was the fact that teachers employed by the government were paid up to three times as much as the mission could afford. The teachers were in Castles’ words “literate, underpaid, hungry for hatangapun (respect), influential in their communities.”

---

283 On the point about the in practice episcopal organisation, see also Castles 1972, p. 139.
284 The position of Johannes Warneck is outlined in Hutauruk 1980, p. 120.
285 For the concept of spiritual independence, see Aritonang 1994, p. 177.
286 Castles 1972, pp. 138ff.
287 There are even examples of teachers who, in addition to other duties, had to manage the household of a missionary. Aritonang 1994, p. 147, n. 82.
288 Aritonang 1994, pp. 146ff.
289 Aritonang 1994, p. 263.
290 Castles 1972, p. 141.
When a teacher had worked for a number of years, it was possible for him to be selected for ordination. After ordination, the RMG doubled his salary and he reached a higher position in the hierarchy with greater prestige. On the other hand, his advancement did not imply that he was approaching the prestige and power of the missionaries, called Tuan Pandita. This was evident in the mistrust shown to the Toba clergy in financial matters and church discipline, in which they had no independent responsibility. They were instead placed under a local RMG missionary. The position of the Toba clergy is clearly shown in the entry pandita in Johannes Warneck’s Toba-Batak- German dictionary. Warneck translates “Pandita Batak” (literally “Batak minister”) into “assistant-preacher” (Hilfsprediger). Toba clergy were, in other words, simply regarded as assistants to the missionary without independent responsibilities.

The Toba clergy certainly also wanted more influence in the Church, but even though they were often critical of the mission, they generally kept these sentiments to themselves. Compared with the teachers, they were under more direct control by the missionaries but also had more to lose if they were fired for being “unruly”. In general, they were also probably selected for ordination because they had the fewest tendencies to criticise their superiors.

The role of Hatopan Kristen Batak. The most important organisation that openly criticised the mission and demanded more Toba influence was Hatopan Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Association, HKB). Because of its general importance, it is here necessary to go into some detail about HKB activities and its role in the community.

The HKB was a genuine Toba Christian movement but was clearly influenced by the nationalist movement. Its leader Manullang was a member of the radical nationalist party Insulinde and would occasionally co-operate with similar parties founded by Muslims in South Tapanuli. Castles concludes that the HKB was a “proto-nationalist party”. It was founded in a specific cultural and religious context.

---

292 Castles 1972, p. 142.
293 Tampubolon 1976, p. 16. “Tuan” is a loan word from Malay and was used with respect to address European men.
294 Castles 1972, pp. 138f.
296 Tampubolon 1976, p. 17.
297 Castles 1972, p. 142.
298 Castles 1972, p. 164. Insulinde was the successor of Indische Partai, which had been founded in 1911 by the radical Indo-European E. Douwes Dekker. It was one of the first nationalist parties that unequivocally called for independence from the Netherlands.
milieu but articulated a vague nationalist consciousness. There were, on the other hand, members of the organisation who were more conservative and thought that Insulinde was anti-Christian and too radical. The RMG missionaries criticised Manullang for betraying Christianity by allying himself with “revolutionaries” and Muslims. Manullang would counteract the criticism by asking if the missionaries were following “Jesus of Europe” instead of “Jesus of Nazareth”.

The HKB was founded in Balige in 1917 and official aim was “to work for Batak Christian interests”. This meant that it soon became an important channel for the Toba to express their demands for more influence in the mission organisation and their strivings for progress. The HKB’s paper Soara Batak (Batak Voice) was the most important of the many Toba newspapers that started to flourish in the 1920s. The HKB had its main supporters among those with a relatively good education, an important group being the teachers employed by the RMG. Manullang’s political activities inspired by Christianity most likely had one root in the fact that his Christian father had remained a close associate of Singamangaraja and had once taken his son on a secret journey to visit the headquarters of the Toba leader.

The HKB was clearly part of the hamajun movement. The organisation suggested that for the development of Tapanuli a Toba bank and a plantation company should be founded. The modernising attitude is also evident from the fact that they were critical of certain aspects of adat, for instance, because it did not secure the rights of women to inherit. They demanded that Dutch Law should replace adat as the legal system in Tapanuli.

To begin with the RMG missionaries supported the movement. The HKB was regarded as an ally, and partly used as a cover, in the successful struggle to keep commercial plantations out of Tapanuli. One of the slogans of the HKB was “cultivate your land so that it is not stolen by the company”. The movement, claiming that it had 4000 members, reached a peak in 1919, when Manullang was given an audience with the Governor-General in Jakarta. Manullang was promised that no new land would be given to plantation companies before a thorough investigation had been made. He returned to Tapanuli in triumph. The number

---

299 Casdes 1972, pp. 166ff, 173f.
300 Casdes 1972, p. 164.
301 Casdes 1972, p. 169.
302 Hutauruk 1980, p. 146.
303 Casdes 1972, p. 169.
304 Manullang and his father’s relations with Singamangaraja are related by Casdes 1972, p. 144, but an explicit connection with Manullang’s political ideas is not made.
305 Casdes 1972, p. 156, n. 81.
of members was impressive for an organisation such as the HKB, but it had many more sympathisers than formal members. The popularity of Manullang increased further when in 1921 he spent 15 months in prison for “spreading hatred” in an article against plantation owners.307

The colonial authorities finally decided that commercial plantations would not be allowed in Tapanuli. They were keen to preserve the political stability of the area, an interest that was in the end more important than the plantation companies’ ambitions to enlarge their estates. For most HKB supporters, the raison d’être of the organisation was its struggle against the plantation companies. When the main goal had been achieved, the influence of the HKB declined, although the movement was active until the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1942.308

The criticism of the mission and its missionaries took the form of concrete demands for more Toba influence over the mission. These demands remained important even after the influence of the HKB had declined.

The organisation demanded that each congregation should have an elected church council as the representative body of the community.309 The HKB also demanded more influence in Church discipline matters and wanted the HKB leadership to be consulted when the mission wanted to discipline members for some offence.310 The demand had immediate implications for the HKB, because Amir Hamzah (Lumbantobing), one of Manullang’s closest co-workers, was under Church discipline after having taken a second wife. The mission rejected the demands of the HKB and instead required that members who were under Church discipline should be expelled from the organisation.311

The HKB also came into conflict with the mission over the right to use church buildings for their meetings. The missionaries argued that the meetings dealt with secular issues and hence could not be held in churches. The HKB, on the other hand, referred to the fact that the meetings had a Christian character and that prayers and the singing of hymns were always included. On several occasions, HKB members forced their way into a church, claiming that the people who had paid for the churches also owned them.312

The RMG missionaries were in general highly critical of HKB demands. They often ridiculed the leaders of the organisation and questioned their morals. Further information can be found in Casdes (1972), pp. 136f, 149, 159ff, 162f. Castles points out that Toba co-operation in Church discipline matter was nothing new. Missionaries often consulted the raja when one of their subjects ran the risk of being put under Church discipline, Castles 1972, p. 151.}

307 Castles 1972, pp. 136f, 149, 159ff, 162f.
308 Castles 1972, pp. 155ff.
309 Castles 1972, p. 155.
310 Castles 1972, pp. 136f, 149, 159ff, 162f.
311 Castles 1972, p. 151.
312 Castles 1972, p. 149.
thermore, they objected to what they regarded as “the materialistic spirit of the Batak”, threatening to draw them away from the spiritual path. 313

In the early 1930s, the well-known Dutch missionary and missiologist Hendrik Kraemer observed that the majority of the RMG missionaries had been present in the area for many years and did not want to change the way they worked. They had arrived in Sumatra before World War I and had not returned home to be influenced by developments in the West. 314 The general unwillingness to transfer power from missionaries to Toba leaders was supported by the colonial authorities who preferred that Church organisations should remain under European leadership. 315

The founding of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in 1930. In the 1920s, the ever-increasing demands for more Toba influence over the mission resulted in the RMG missionaries starting a process to institutionalise a proper Batak Church, which would transfer some of their power to the Batak Christians. In the late 1920s the process accelerated after some small Toba groups had rebelled and founded their own Churches. 316

In 1920, the RMG accepted the HKB proposal to introduce local church councils (kerkraad). Replacing the former division between Synodal proceedings, attended only by missionaries, and general proceedings, a yearly Synod (Synode Godang) of the Batak Church was launched in 1922. 317 In 1925, the Batak Church was officially named Huria Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Church) by the RMG. 318

In 1929, a new Church order, formulated by Ephorus Warneck, was launched to take effect on 1 May 1930. Now the Church was called Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (Batak Christian Protestant Church, HKBP) and, as such, it obtained official recognition by the Dutch authorities in 1931. The Synod, which was formally higher in authority than the missionary conference, consisted of 12 missionaries, 44 delegates from congregations, 7 raja and the chairmen of the ministers’ convention and the teachers’ convention respectively. 319 The Executive Committee of the Synod consisted of the Ephorus, two missionaries, one Batak representative from each of the five districts, one minister and one teacher. 320

313 Aritonang 1994, pp. 234f.
314 Kraemer 1958, pp. 43f.
315 Schreiner 1972, p. 79.
316 The development of these Churches will be an important theme in Chapter 4.
319 Aritonang 1994, p. 244.
320 Nyhus 1987, pp. 57f.
From the composition of these two bodies, it appears that the Toba Christians, and mainly the Toba lay people, had become the main authority in the Church. The organisation made room for more Toba participation and provided forums where formal suggestions could be made and criticism of missionary policies put forward. But, on several crucial points, RMG missionaries remained firmly in control. They were, for instance, exclusively in charge of all finances and the administration of property, including the administration of schools. In relation to local congregations, they had the right, when present, to assume the chairmanship, and could also veto decisions made by a local council. They were also, as Praeses and Pandita Ressort (minister of a number of congregations), clearly in charge of the Toba ministers. The latter continued to be regarded as “assistant ministers”. Both the Synod and the Executive Committee were led by the Ephorus, who had the right to veto decisions about finances. In practice, it was the missionary conferences that made the important decisions.321 The continuing missionary dominance in the Church was obviously caused both by their formal position of authority and by the respect they commanded among the majority of the Toba.

Some Toba were satisfied with the founding of the HKBP and took advantage of the new structures. However, Toba criticism of the mission and radical demands for the complete autonomy of the Church were voiced from within the HKBP all through the 1930s.322

A self-propagating Church

From the beginning of the missionary activities of the RMG on Sumatra, most conversions occurred as a response to the preaching of a missionary. But very soon the main initiative in spreading the new religion was taken over by Toba Christians. One of the main agencies behind the rapid expansion of the mission was the large number of evangelists who spontaneously offered their services to the mission. According to the missionaries, the advantage of these evangelists doing missionary work was that they knew the best routes to travel and how to adapt the Christian message to Toba culture. Without their contribution, the rapid expansion of the mission would not have been possible.323

---

322 Aritonang 1994, pp. 244ff.
323 Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 168ff.
With regard to the financing of these efforts, some evangelists were eventually employed by the mission, while the majority were not.\textsuperscript{324} I assume that the evangelists were supported by relatives and local congregations. But it is also likely that they combined evangelistic activities with other endeavours. One example is in the Dairi Batak region, where the first people to introduce Christianity were Toba traders, who eventually married local women and won people for the new religion.\textsuperscript{325} From this example, one may infer that people, such as traders, who were mobile on account of their occupation, played an important role in spreading Christianity to new areas. Beyerhaus says that the activities of the evangelists were motivated by "... their eagerness to preach the Christian message...".\textsuperscript{326} One should add that in many cases they presumably simultaneously engaged in more mundane and profitable activities.

In 1898-99, the efforts of the evangelists were centralised in the Kongsi Batak organisation, led by the Rev. Henoch Lumbantobing. The task of the organisation was to propagate Christianity among non-Christian Batak. This organisation is one sign from the turn of the century that Toba Christians were trying to find ways to contribute independently to the mission. It was organised into regional branches and elected representatives from congregations from the whole region gathered once every year for a general conference, at which common issues were addressed. To accomplish this task, the organisation financed evangelists, who travelled to areas in North Tapanuli where there still remained many adherents of traditional religion. In 1909, the Rev. Lumbantobing resigned from the leadership of the organisation because the missionaries wanted to connect the body more clearly with the central leadership of the mission.\textsuperscript{327}

The organisation came under missionary control and assumed responsibility for certain central tasks. In 1921, the name of the organisation was changed to Zending Batak (Batak Mission). Its tasks now included evangelisation among non-Christian Batak, support for those who had migrated and the running of a home for the blind (Hephata) and a sanatorium for lepers (Huta Salem). Zending Batak was led by a committee that consisted of five indigenous Christians and three missionaries, obviously in a conscious effort to underline the Toba initiative. The relatively independent authority of the organisation and the importance of the

\textsuperscript{324} Aritonang starts to include "evangelists" in the category of "indigenous workers" only from 1891. In that year, six evangelists were employed. Aritonang 1994, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{325} Eben Ezer 1986, pp. 30f.
\textsuperscript{326} "... deren Eifer in der Verkündigung der christlichen Botschaft ...". Beyerhaus 1956, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{327} Hutauruk 1980, pp. 135ff.
duties to which it was assigned implied that the organisation remained credible and continued to receive support from many Christian Toba.\(^{328}\)

These examples show that there was a great willingness among Toba converts to spread their new-won faith. The willingness was not significantly thwarted by RMG efforts to gain the ultimate control over these initiatives. One can conclude that most efforts to spread the new religion were undertaken by Toba Christians themselves.

In relation to Gustav Warneck's theology of mission, these endeavours to spread Christianity could easily be interpreted as a successful example of building a Church that was self-expanding and in which the "true believers" (ecclesia) took care of this specific task within the Church (ecclesia).

The formation of a Toba Batak ethno-religious identity

In previous research, it has generally been assumed that there was an intimate relationship between the Toba ethnic and religious identities. From a historical perspective, it is important to raise the question of when the Toba appeared as an ethnic group and how ethnic identity became connected with Christianity. I shall also briefly discuss the emergence of sub-ethnic identities.

The study of the history of ethnic labels and identities for the Batak groups has generally not attracted much attention. Perret has analysed the way in which the borderline between Malay and Batak identities was constructed but has not devoted attention to the time when a specific Toba identity appeared.\(^{329}\) With regard to the Karo Batak, Kipp has discussed the emergence of a Karo Batak ethnic identity. She attributes it to the efforts of the RMG and the NZG, the Dutch mission that was active in the Karo area, to delimit their respective areas in relation to the colonial administrative borders. Another factor was Karo interaction with Toba migrants into the Karo area, a development that became significant in the 1920s and defined the ethnic borders between the Toba and the Karo.\(^{330}\) Even though Kipp's discussion pertains to the formation of Toba ethnic identity in relation to the Karo in the 1920s, her main focus is on the Karo. This means that she does not discuss generally when and how a distinct Toba ethnic identity was formed.

\(^{328}\) For a general perspective, see Beyerhaus 1956, pp. 187ff. Hutauruk has a much more detailed account and is clearly critical of the role of the missionaries. Hutauruk 1980, pp. 134ff.

\(^{329}\) His passages on colonisation and mission in North Tapanuli are devoid of any such discussion. Perret 1995, pp. 192ff, 199ff.

\(^{330}\) Smith Kipp 1993, pp. 45ff.
In the body of literature devoted to the specific study of various aspects of Toba history, there is a conspicuous lack of discussion about the process of Toba identity formation. The implicit and unproblematic assumption is that the Toba as an ethnic group were simply "there" before the arrival of missionaries and colonial officers. The more or less timeless existence of the ethnic group is taken for granted.

The exception to this general presupposition is Castles, who has a more sophisticated approach. When he analyses the ethnic developments in Tapanuli, his main focus is on the relation between ethnic loyalties and the emergence of a national consciousness. He is, however, well aware that the sense of ethnic identity was a relatively recent development. In relation to the Toba in pre-colonial times, he says:

Whether or not they were literally unaware of the existence of non-Batak peoples, they saw themselves, not as one group among others, but as a universe. Only by prolonged and intensive contact with outsiders were the sukubangsa (ethnic group) defined... Furthermore, he claims that:

After they became Christians their primitive superiority feelings received a new justification. Before 1945 ... there was among them a strong feeling of being a unique group, to the point that they considered themselves 'a chosen people'. Europeans generally attributed (to) them an excess of self-confidence, and this is also the impression they often give today.

There are some unclear points in Castles’ account. It is not apparent when the creation of ethnic identity started or how the “primitive superiority feelings” were related to Christian mission. If these “feelings” existed before the mission began its activities, the RMG appears to have served merely as a “tool” to articulate Toba uniqueness. But if these sentiments were connected with ethnic identity it is unclear when this identity appeared. It seems more likely that Castles actually refers to the sense of being the only human beings at the centre of the universe, instead of ethnic identity, which is defined in relation to other ethnic groups. If this was the case, it is, on the other hand, unclear what role the mission played in relation to the articulation of ethnic identity.

This short discussion reveals that there is a lack of interest in the issue of identity formation and that the role of the mission in the process has not been considered seriously. What I intend to do in the following pages is to propose a scenario for the formation of a Toba identity in which Christian mission plays a crucial role. This is important from the general research point of view and because it provides an analytical bridge to the coming chapters. With regard to other

---

331 Castles 1972, pp. 171ff.
332 Castles 1972, p. 178.
studies of Indonesian history, a similar analysis has been made by A. Schrauwers who has explored the role of the Dutch Mission Society in creating "the Toraja" on Sulawesi. 334

Before the 1860s, contacts with other regions were not very developed and knowledge of other ethnic groups was limited. The Toba were involved in the complex social interaction guided mainly by the dalihan na tolu system, which was always restricted in geographical scope. Generally, they could not travel very far before custom and language became strange and their security was in danger. 335

There was certainly some awareness of other groups. The Padri expansion into Tapanuli was remembered and, in contrast to South Tapanuli, Islam did not gain prestige after the war. The Toba would also have a vague notion of Aceh as an important power in the region. To this testify the later rumours that superior Acehnese warriors would help Singamangaraja in his struggle against Dutch colonisers. 336

With regard to contacts between various villages and different regions there are two factors that need to be taken into account, namely the Singamangaraja and the clan system. Singamangaraja was revered, but his political power was limited. He was generally regarded as an authority but seldom involved directly in local affairs. The clan system was pertinent in the local context, where it determined, for instance, the marriage pattern. According to Vergouwen's classic ethnographic account, the Toba in the 1920s often had an extended knowledge of their forefathers. But it appears that the general knowledge of the overall system was more limited. 337

The significant point is that in most, if not all, situations in life the existence of "others" was simply not relevant, and distant marga with whom one did not uphold relations were not of much concern. In an almost stateless society, the interest was mainly in the immediate surroundings, the neighbouring villages and marga with whom relations had been established. The implication is that a Toba ethnic identity had not been formed by the mid-18th century. The Toba were still a universe in themselves, not a group among others.

From the 1860s, the process of identity formation began. It was connected with increased communications and interaction with other ethnic groups. Migration was an important aspect, both rural migration mainly to the Pakpak and Simalungun areas and urban migration to cities like Jakarta and Medan. 338 Migration into Tapanuli also occurred, by Chinese who were engaged in business, Dutch

335 Castles 1972, p. 178.
336 Warneck 1925, pp. 116f, 128.
337 See Vergouwen 1964, pp. 18ff.
338 The question of Toba migration will be discussed in the next chapter.
colonial administrators and RMG missionaries. These developments brought home the information that the Toba were part of a larger context of other groups that they were in various ways related to.

Through these contacts, the Toba became aware that they were despised. “Batak” was a term of abuse and they were regarded as rough and primitive cannibals. In South Tapanuli, Mandailing Batak especially but also Angkola Batak developed an inferiority complex which meant that in the end they denied their Batakness altogether. In the north there were similar sentiments, but not as strong. When ethnic identity was mobilised, the Toba did not internalise the outsiders’ view but instead claimed they were proud to be Batak.

The RMG mission had, in relation to other political and religious organisations, a strong position. This makes it a promising candidate in the search of the actors or institutions that were crucial in the process of forming ethnic identity. The mission was clearly an outside factor, but its specific development, in which the Toba were active in shaping its development and accommodating Christianity to their world-view, implies that the RMG mission should also be regarded as an internal factor used by the Toba to articulate who they were.

The role of the mission as a factor in ethnic mobilisation should be sought in two factors. The first is the missionary ideals and the second the organisational structure of the mission, as such.

With regard to the missionary ideals, I shall highlight the role of the Three Selves formula, the cultural policies of the mission and the ideal of Volkschristianizierung. These ideals were conveyed by the missionaries in preaching and by other means, and internalised and implemented by their Toba converts. Sometimes, missionary ideals were even consciously used by the Toba to challenge missionary paternalism.

The Three Selves formula implied that the Toba would become responsible for the Church. Regardless of the continuing dominance of the missionaries within the mission structure, the active participation and appropriation by Toba Christians implied that they had come to regard the Church and the Christian faith as their own.

The general trend among the RMG missionaries on Sumatra was to approach Toba culture in a sympathetic way, on the basis of the notion that adat was a “preparation for the Gospel” and that the Toba had to be converted within the context of their own culture. The relatively tolerant, cultural policies of the RMG missionaries meant that the Toba social system and many cultural practices were integrated into the Church. Some appropriations of the Toba Christians were not

foreseen or accepted by the RMG missionaries. These dynamics had the effect that Toba culture and Christianity became integrated. Christianity took on a distinct Toba shape.

The effect of the Three Selves formula, combined with the cultural practices of the missionaries, had the result that their newly adopted Christian identity and their cultural identity were joined together.

The ideal of *Volkschristianizierung* implied that the Batak were one people and would be united into one Church. The strategy was not applicable in South Tapanuli and in the Simalungun area, where Islam had already penetrated when the mission arrived. Among the Karo, the Dutch mission NZG was active, which implied that they were not within reach of RMG activities. Among the Toba, however, the strategy of *Volkschristianizierung* had great success. The message was that horizons should be widened. Loyalty and identification should not be limited to the *marga* and other *marga* and villages with whom they had relations. Instead, identification should be expanded and to some extent superseded by a new identity. It was aimed to include the whole people. The Toba started to realise that they shared the new identity with many others with whom they did not interact directly. A Toba Christian "imagined community" was in the making.\(^\text{340}\) Even if the Toba had previously some awareness of the overall *marga* system, the Christian identity they adopted was a new factor. It provided a basis for articulating ethnic identity and as a result provided this identity with a strong Christian component.

In relation to what Castles called the "primitive superiority feelings", I would agree with him that the mission in a sense justified these sentiments. If previously God and the gods had elected the Toba, they were now elected by the God revealed in Jesus Christ. This sense of a God-given destiny was one way to counter the negative stereotype of them in the outside world. But the important point is that the mission was not a simple "tool" for articulating superiority, but an active agent transforming the Toba from a universe into an ethnic group.

In this context, one can assume that the literary efforts of the mission were important, since the Toba Batak language was seen as a pillar of the people and the Church. The translation of the Bible into Toba Batak and the formulation of a Toba Batak liturgy had the effect that a standardised version of Toba Batak emerged. The notion of a distinct Toba Batak language emerged, an idea that would be incorporated in the formulation of ethnic identity.\(^\text{341}\)

\(^{340}\) The expression was coined by Benedict Anderson in connection with his influential study of the origins of nationalism, Anderson 1991, p. 6, but can also be justifiably applied to the study of ethnogenesis.

\(^{341}\) For a similar perspective on the role of the literary efforts of the NZG among the Karo, see Smith Kipp 1993, p. 48.
Apart from the missionary ideals, the organisation of the mission, as such, was important in several respects. The RMG initiated a fine network of congregations and schools over the whole area. It was the only organisation in North Tapanuli that effectively connected previously relatively separate marga and villages into a larger structure. Compared with the colonial administration, the mission had a much stronger organisation and many more European personnel. One of the main assets of the mission was also its strong cadre of loyal, although not necessarily uncritical, co-workers, such as clergy, teachers and elders. The strength of the missionary organisation was furthermore directly related to the colonial comity policy. It meant that the RMG mission, at least until the 1930s, was virtually unchallenged by other missionary organisations.

The education of indigenous ministers and teachers enabled people from different regions to meet, to overcome the gap between them and to realise that they had something in common. After graduation, they would be stationed in different parts of North Tapanuli to serve the Church and at the same time to be witnesses to the larger structure in which individual marga were incorporated. At a time when communications were being established on a much larger scale than before between different parts of North Tapanuli, the mission structure in itself also provided an important means of communication.

The mass meetings and conferences regularly arranged by the mission provided opportunities to meet with people who shared the same identity from other parts of North Tapanuli. The contacts involved the possibility of connecting with distant marga and actualising the overall marga structure in a new context. These occasions were then demonstrations of their common identity of being simultaneously Christians and Toba.

The conclusion is that, even though colonialism and the development of communications in general were factors when the Toba ethnic identity was formed, the RMG mission was the main agent in forming the Toba as an ethnic group. But it is once more important to stress that the Toba were not passive objects in the process. While the mission created them as an ethnic group, one should also say that the Toba actively created themselves through the mission. The fundamental reason for the strong connections between the Toba ethnic and religious identities has to be sought in the fact that they were created simultaneously and were mutually dependent on one another. This conclusion is then also an argument that it is fruitful to use the concept of ethno-religious identity in this study.

Parallel to the development of a Toba ethno-religious identity, distinct, sub-ethnic, regional identities also emerged. Before the arrival of the mission, markets and sacrificial communities existed which in some cases involved a large part of a
smaller region. But it is very likely that the mission played an important role also in articulating these identities. The relations between the Silindung and Toba areas will serve as an example.

Because of the gradual geographical spread of the RMG mission, the Silindung Valley was the first area where congregations and schools were established. It was then natural that they should predominate among the indigenous personnel of the mission. It was furthermore mainly people from Silindung who came to work for the Dutch administration in Tapanuli.

In the Toba area, the mission was established in the 1880s, some 20 years later than in Silindung. The people in the Toba area soon realised that the mission and its schools could bring benefits to them, but they also realised that they had less access to progress than the people in Silindung. Evangelistic work in the Toba region was done by clergy and teachers from Silindung. These Christians showed the people in the Toba region, both that such prestigious positions were available if they converted to Christianity and that they had been left far behind.

An early case of conflict between Toba and Silindung occurred in 1918 at the HIS in Sigompulon near Tarutung in Silindung. The school was the first public HIS established in North Tapanuli. In 1918, only one student from Toba was accepted, all the other students coming from Silindung. This situation led to protests in the Toba region and the mission then felt obliged to start a HIS also in that region. This new school was built in Narumonda, on the shore of the southeast corner of Lake Toba.

Even though the conflict on the crucial question of access to education meant that antagonism between the two areas was strengthened, the main point here is that regional identities had been so firmly established that conflicts were articulated along these lines. Tensions between these two regional groups were to show also in the migration of the Toba into the Simalungun area and to the east coast.

From this example, it seems that increased communications within North Tapanuli also implied an increasing awareness of differences between the regions, especially related to the development of schools and congregations. The conflict that led the mission to build the school in Narumonda is an obvious case that clarifies how the identity of the regions was strengthened when it became obvi-

342 Castles 1975, p. 69.
344 The school in Sigompulon near Tarutung was started in 1910 and was later transformed into a HIS. Aritonang 1994, pp. 168, 171.
345 Aritonang 1994, pp. 288ff. It is possible that this school in fact replaced the previous teachers' seminary there, which was closed in 1919. Aritonang 1994, pp. 189ff, 263.
346 See Chapter 4, section "The role of sub-ethnic tensions".
ous that they were competing for the resources of the mission. The creation of regional identities and of a Toba Batak ethno-religious identity were then to a large extent two parts of the same process.

The rest of this study will be focused on the migration of Toba out of Tapanuli to the city of Medan. At this stage of the investigation, it is important to summarise some points already made, in order to place the ethno-religious identity of the Toba in its context in Tapanuli.

Toba ethno-religious identity was rooted in an ethnically homogeneous, peasant society, on which colonialism had certainly had an important impact, but not as much as in South Tapanuli, let alone on the east coast of Sumatra. The village, dominated by one marga, remained the basic social unit. The raja still had political authority, although it was dependent on their relation to the Dutch administration. Adat remained in function as the basis of jurisdiction, administered by raja, and of social life in general. Although some Toba were eager to learn other languages, the Toba Batak language remained the language used in daily conversation and in church.

Christianity had been incorporated and appropriated into the Toba cosmos. The structure of the mission was adapted to the marga structure, while raja were influential in the local congregations and were important partners of the missionaries. At the top end of the structure, the RMG missionaries remained the main authorities, although they were sometimes contested. They regarded North Tapanuli as their Promised Land, to which God had sent them to build the Batak People’s Church. The Toba responded to the call of the missionaries and emerged as a Christian ethnic group.
CHAPTER 3
Toba Batak, RMG mission and
the challenge of Medan (1912-1925)

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have discussed the development of the region of East Sumatra, including its capital Medan, and the formation of a distinct, Toba Batak, ethno-religious identity. This chapter will deal with the first phase of the Toba presence in Medan. The period starts in 1912, when the first Toba congregation was established in the city. It ends in 1925, when new developments began that eventually led to several splits in the Toba congregation.

The migration of the Toba to the east coast and Medan began during the first decade of the 20th century. For the daring few who ventured to the east coast, the change in the milieu in which they lived was striking. In Tapanuli, they were in the majority, and Christianity had become the religion of the majority in many areas. The only adversary to the progress of Christianity was traditional religion, but it was losing ground and did not have a strong, organisational base that could withstand the onslaught of mission schools and congregations. On the east coast, on the contrary, the Toba encountered a Muslim culture that was based on the power of the Sultan, defined and upheld by the colonial power, a culture to which it was more or less taken for granted that indigenous peoples would assimilate.

The specific society on the east coast, the Malay-Muslim dominance among the local population and the various Christian denominations active in Medan presented a profound challenge to the ethno-religious identity of the migrants. The main questions that need to be discussed in relation to these migrants are as follows: Was it at all possible to remain Toba Christians in this new milieu? If they remained Christians, how was Christian worship organised? In what way were relations with Tapanuli maintained, including that with the RMG?

For the RMG missionaries, Toba migration to Medan also implied a challenge, because the city was outside their normal area of work. Questions that will be discussed are as follows: In what way did the RMG missionaries feel responsible
for these migrants? Was it possible to transfer the ideal of the People's Church to a region where the Toba represented only a small minority? If co-operation was needed with other organisations, with whom could they co-operate?

Early Toba Batak migration to Medan

Toba Batak migration and migratory patterns

In Toba mythology, the theme of migration is well known. The myth of the origin of all Batak relates the event when Si Raja Batak descended at Mount Pusuk Buhit, situated on the west shore of Lake Toba. Since that time, his descendants have formed many clans, which have spread out in all directions.1

Migration has also been an important development in recent Toba history. Rural migration into the Pakpak and Simalungun areas started about 1900. During the 1920s, the rural migration into the Karo area was an important development.2 With regard to urban migration, their strong tradition of education had the effect that the Toba during the first few decades of the century moved to cities on all the islands of the Dutch colony. In Batavia, the Toba lived permanently at least from 1907 and in 1917 there were about 30 living in the capital. The majority of them were students.3

In relation to the discussion in this chapter, it is useful to refer to migratory patterns and to broaden the perspective to include the patterns of other relevant ethnic groups. The phenomenon of circular migration is a well-known pattern among the Minangkabau. Young men are encouraged to seek experience and fortune outside the village for some time before they return home. In Minangkabau matrilineal culture, land is inherited on the mother's side, while young men have to venture outside the village. With reference to the Minangkabau living in Medan, Pelly has argued that, even though people may live for a very long time in Medan, they are still prepared to return home. They will, for instance, often build a house at home, where they plan to settle after retirement. Pelly refers to this pattern as a culturally conditioned, migratory pattern.4

In contrast to the pattern among the Minangkabau, Pelly argues that the migration of the Batak groups Mandailing and Toba should be discussed with refer-

---

1 See Perret 1995, p. 35, for a map of these traditions based on Vergouwen's genealogy.
3 HKBP Kermolong 1986, pp. 2f.
ence to their ideal of establishing their own kingdom (*harajaon*). This implies that they will seek to establish their kingdom wherever they go and do not, like the Minangkabau, cherish the ideal that they will sometime return home.5 In relation to the importance of the ideal of *harajaon* in Toba culture, I find this characteristic useful, although other cultural ideals of the Toba also need to be brought into the discussion. In relation to Pelly's argument I will, however, also briefly explore the ideal of circular migration with regard to Toba migration.

The migration to Medan before 1912

At the turn of the century, the Toba started to migrate to Simalungun and in 1907 a RMG missionary estimated that 50-60 Toba were working on plantations around Pematang Siantar.6 Most migrants were, however, peasants who had started wet-rice cultivation. The Simalungun Batak had traditionally cultivated dry rice, but when the skilled Toba Batak arrived, they were soon outnumbered.7 In 1920, it was estimated that 26,000 Toba migrants were to be found in Simalungun.8 Migration was conditioned by the fact that plantations had reached Simalungun rather late, and there was still land available unoccupied by plantation companies. On the east coast, on the other hand, plantations had been established longer and there was little land available for new migrants.

The Toba migrants who were able to establish themselves beyond Simalungun were those who migrated to cities on the east coast. The first town where they found employment was Arnhemia (the present Pancur Batu) 15 km from Medan where the controleur Kok, after contacts with Nommensen, managed to provide a few Toba with employment.9

During the first decade of the century, communications between Tapanuli and the east coast were not well developed. One of the most common ways of travelling from Tapanuli was to cross Lake Toba from Balige to Haranggaol or Tiga Ras on the east coast of the lake. From there, the only means of reaching Pematang Siantar was to travel on foot for three days. From Pematang Siantar to the area around Medan, one had to walk for five days. Sometimes one could obtain a horse and cart and travel somewhat faster.10 Even though walking on foot must have been the normal means of travelling in Tapanuli, these examples

---

5 Pelly 1983, pp. 15f, 60f.
6 Müller to Inspector, 9 November 1907. BM 1.992. VEM.
7 Warneck 1925, pp. 155f.
8 Casdes 1972, pp. 190f.
10 Tampubolon 1937, p. 7.
still show what efforts some Toba were willing to make in their search for employment. These endeavours are also cherished in the oral tradition of the Toba community in Medan.11

Toba migration to Medan started during the first decade of the 20th century. In 1908, the RMG industrial school in Laguboti took part in an exhibition of “native works” in Medan and the school won several prizes.12 A cultural group, led by Andreas Simangunsong from Pematang Siantar, accompanied the group from Laguboti. After the exhibition, a small group remained in Medan looking for work.13 Simangunsong was the main organiser of Toba migration into Simalungun.14

It is likely that even before 1908, there were Toba living in Medan. Catholic sources report that in 1896 two Toba children were baptised in the city. Their parents were Protestants from the Silindung Valley.15 It is not known what happened to these new Catholics, but it is likely that they did not live in the city or were not able to remain Catholic. The example still indicates that, even before the turn of the century, there were isolated instances of Toba presence in Medan. The issue is complicated by the fact that the first Toba, concealed their identity because of the general cultural situation in the city.16 Except for the single Catholic example mentioned above, they are not referred to in the sources.

One of the very first Toba who settled permanently in Medan was J. Tampubolon. In his work on the history of the Toba congregation in Medan, he claims to have settled in the city in 1909.17 During the following years, migration was rather slow and by 1912 about 30 Toba had settled in the city.18

11 Tampubolon’s account is obviously based on his and other Toba’s experiences. But I have also several times heard similar accounts by persons who most probably had not read Tampubolon’s book.
14 Simangunsong continued to be engaged in Toba migration. In 1917, he became official advisor to the Dutch with regard mainly to the rural migration into the Simalungun region. He held this position until his death in 1921, but he was not succeeded by anyone else. Castles 1972, p. 190.
15 Kronieken Sumatra Missie, p. 5. ACH.
16 See section “Not disclosing one’s identity”.
17 Tampubolon 1937, p. 66. It is possible that in fact he was one of the members of the Toba cultural group of 1908 who decided to stay in Medan.
The white-collar worker as ideal and stereotype

The Toba community on the east coast grew significantly in 1912 when 133 Toba started to work for Opiumregie, the state opium company founded in the same year. They were contracted as early as December 1911 and began their assignment in March 1912. These men were stationed at the central depot and sales office in Medan, while others were assigned to various places on the east coast and in Simalungun, where the company had offices. Employees of Opiumregie are often mentioned in my sources and it seems that they played an important role in the Toba community during the first decades of the century. The available sources do not indicate what qualifications these Toba men had that made them eligible for employment. Those who were employed by Opiumregie probably had some kind of administrative experience and a knowledge of Dutch or Malay.

From 1915 onwards, migration was facilitated by the development of communications. In 1915, the Trans-Sumatra highway was completed and in 1916, the railway reached Pematang Siantar. The area of Simalungun to which many Toba farmers had migrated was now connected also by rail with the urban centres on the east coast. The new ease with which hopeful individuals could travel to Medan is reflected in the statistics of the Toba congregation in Medan. In 1915, this congregation reported that it had about 300 members, and in 1926 the formal members numbered 1018.

Initially, most Toba who settled in Medan were men who had obtained employment as office staff in the colonial administration and private companies. The occupations of the members of two successive boards of the Toba voluntary association about 1918 provide an illustration of their employment at the time. The members included eight clerks who worked for Opiumregie, the tax office in Medan, the local police, the local railway company Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij, the forestry office and a private company. Three low-ranking employees worked for Opiumregie and the tax offices in Medan and Arnhemia, and two teachers worked in Medan and Arnhemia respectively. The list also includes a telegraphist of the Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij, a police officer and the Toba minister in Medan. Tampubolon gives the exact titles of these board members, which indicates that the Toba were very well aware and proud of their newly acquired positions.

19 For the development of Opiumregie, see Chapter 2, section “The development of commercial agriculture”.
20 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1914, p. 9. BM 2.867. VEM. Tampubolon 1937, p. 21f.
21 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1915-1916. BM 2.867. VEM. Tampubolon 1937, p. 73.
22 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 29f. I have not been able to determine exactly what kind of positions these people had. The persons I have called clerks are called klerk, schrijver, tekenaar and tekenaarschrijver, the low-ranking employees mantri or helper, in this source.
In order to understand the employment of Toba men in Medan, we must take the strong Toba tradition of education into account. In North Tapanuli, the Toba had since the 1860s made abundant use of the schools which the RMG provided. They had also made the mission reconsider its negative attitude to Dutch education, which led to the opening of several HIS. The entry to HIS was limited to children of RMG employees and wealthy families. Some education in Malay was also initiated.23 Almost all the Toba men I interviewed who had been living in Medan before 1942 and had graduated in the 1930s graduated from the HIS.

Office workers who obtained employment in Medan were, by and large, young men.24 The written sources generally assume that they had a Dutch education. The Toba I interviewed who lived in Medan before 1942 had all been educated within the Dutch school system. They had, in other words, 7 years of schooling in which the learning of Dutch was the main goal. Education above the HIS level was until the 1930s very rare and remained an exception during the colonial period.25 The fact that these men had graduated from HIS implies that the migrants came from families who were either wealthy or in which the father was employed by the RMG.

In Tapanuli, there was little demand for people educated in Dutch or Malay. The local Dutch administration needed civil servants with a Dutch education for the lower echelons of the colonial administration, but the desired positions were very few.26 The RMG, whose indigenous clergy and teachers were highly respected in Toba society, did not in general provide employment for which a knowledge of Dutch or Malay was a qualification. Even though the teaching of Malay and Dutch in small portions was included in the curriculum of the seminaries, these languages were not used in the Church and seldom in daily life in Tapanuli. Consequently, to make full use of their education, the only option open to the majority of the educated Toba was to migrate.

On the east coast, the plantation companies and the Dutch administration demanded an increasing number of clerks and office personnel. The demand was rather difficult to satisfy in that region. The Malays, the Karo Batak and Simalungun Batak groups and the Javanese had little experience of schools. Among the Chinese, the interest in and opportunities for education were greater, but educated Chinese were generally engaged in business. There were, in other words, plenty of opportunities for hopeful migrants to obtain white-collar employment on the east coast.

23 See Chapter 2, section “Education as the main tool of progress”.
24 This feature is generally assumed in the sources. In an article by the Toba minister in Medan in 1914, they are called “young men” (Bat. angka didolidi), Josia Hutabarat, “Medan” in Immanuel, September 1914. For a RMG example, see Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1919. BM 2.852. VEM.
25 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
26 See Chapter 2, section “The Toba Batak and the wider world”.


With regard to Toba migrants, some obstacles had to be overcome in order to obtain the employment they desired. In the words of a RMG missionary: "The Muslims held a monopoly over all positions and our Batak Christians could only rarely obtain desirable employment." The Muslims mentioned in this quotation were certainly Mandailing Batak from South Tapanuli, who were already well established in the city. They had been very successful in establishing themselves in the offices and had built up veritable, civil-service "dynasties".

In order to gain access to white-collar jobs, the Toba initially relied on the help of European benefactors. One of them was the earlier mentioned controleur Kok who provided some Toba with employment in Arnhemia 15 kilometres from Medan. Initially, the most important benefactor in Medan was N. Klaassen, the minister of the Protestantsche Kerk in Medan. Individual Toba worshipped in this congregation and the minister established friendly relations with them. He worked actively to provide them with employment. Presumably he used his personal contacts and general standing in the European community to influence employers to hire Christian Batak.

The main reason why the Toba gained an entry to the office labour market has to be sought in the general economic and administrative growth of the region, which involved a steady increase in the demand for non-European employees. This increase meant that it was difficult for any group to monopolise the recruitment of new office workers. In this situation, the Toba, in their endeavour to fulfil the central values in their culture, were very well able to take the chances they got. The Toba are in general known to other ethnic groups as straightforward and able to use all the available methods to seize an opportunity when it arises, qualities that often make other ethnic groups regard them as rough and impolite.

Karin Adam has proposed another explanation of why the Toba were so successful in obtaining white-collar employment. Her opinion is that, because they were Christians, they had already in Tapanuli been "permeated" with western values and manners. It was therefore easier for them than for other ethnic groups to establish contacts with European employers in Medan. Her argument relates to the problem of how western the Toba had become since the arrival of European missionaries in Tapanuli. She does not clearly differentiate between the edu-

---

27 "Die Mohammedaner hatten das Monopol in allen Stellungen und unsere Batakchristen kannte man nur nach den leider wenig günstigen Ausnahmen." Theis, Jahresbericht Medan 1931-32. BM 2.852. VEM. In this report, the then RMG missionary in Medan, about to leave his position in Medan, looks back on the early history of the Toba community in Medan.

28 Pelly 1983, p. 84.
30 Tampubolon 1937, p. 20.
31 Adam 1993, pp. 92f.
cated ones and the rest, which gives the impression that she thinks that the Toba were generally westernised, by virtue of being Christian. Although I do not dismiss her line of reasoning, I think it is more to the point to say that the Toba in various degrees knew how to “play the game” of being western. The act of being western was not primarily a more or less unconscious adaptation by them but a deliberate act to become western in certain situations. It is then more a question of appearing as western than of being western, even though the act of “appearing” in this case certainly presupposes some kind of “being”. Those who had a HIS education had certainly long-term experiences of dealing with Europeans and knew how to behave in their presence, much more than, for instance, a farmer in Tapanuli.

Successful migration to Medan had the effect that the white-collar worker in the Toba community was gradually transformed into an ideal. News about successful migrants was brought back to Tapanuli and many Toba were willing and had the means to follow the example. It increased the demand for education and made even more people come to Medan to try their luck. The ideal of the white-collar worker obtained such a firm grip on the Toba community that they were not very interested in more practical training.

One part of the RMG educational program was the so-called industrial schools and schools for artisans and workmen. In the 1920s, all graduates from these schools obtained good jobs, many on the east coast. In spite of their success, the Toba were not very eager to send their children there. Instead, they preferred theoretical education and to work in offices. It was only in the 1930s, when the economic recession led to a number of white-collar workers being dismissed, that the number of students increased.

Apart from the office-workers, there was also at this early stage of migration a group of Toba children or youngsters who studied in Medan. As early as 1916, 90 young Toba were studying at the various schools in Medan. Most of them lived with relatives in Medan, but at least one group of young boys lived together in a rented apartment. Parents were in many cases prepared to go to great lengths in order to give their children schooling, some, for example, abstaining from eating sufficient food. If the efforts of the parents were not enough, an agreement could be made with the maternal uncle of the child. In these cases the uncle would pay for schooling in exchange for a promise that the child would eventually marry his daughter.

32 See Chapter 2, section “Education as the main tool of progress”.
33 Aritonang 1994, pp. 292f.
34 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1915. BM 2.867. VEM.
The Toba students took advantage of the fact that during the first few decades of the 20th century Medan developed into the main centre for relatively more advanced education in the region. They did not wait for the mission to start Dutch schools for them but wanted to put into practice the goal of Dutch education for their children as soon as possible. From my interviews with old Toba in Medan, it appears that it was not uncommon for a child to move between different schools after having failed to enter one school or to move to a Dutch school after having started at a regular mission school.

Various mission organisations, mainly Methodist and Catholic, were instrumental in providing education for the Toba in Medan. These schools are frequently referred to in Toba sources, and especially the Methodist Boys School appears to have been the most important one.

In the documentation from this period, Toba students in Medan are always referred to as „Jünglinge” (young men). It was almost exclusively boys who were given the opportunity to gain education at another level than the primary schools of the mission. Male dominance in education was, in other words, even more pronounced in Medan than in the mission schools in Tapanuli. The implication is that hopes of hamajuon were generally connected with the educational advancement of young males. Although the daughters of those who had already settled in Medan certainly went to primary school, it is likely that their brothers were better supported in order to obtain a more advanced education.

Students in Medan were white-collar-workers-to-be, regardless of whether their parents lived in Medan or Tapanuli. Most of them remained in Medan after graduation and searched for employment. Some young men took temporary jobs before finding a desired occupation in Medan. One example is W. Lumbantobing (b.1914), who after graduation from the Roman Catholic English School in 1930 returned to his home village. Then he worked for a Chinese photographer in Perdagangan, a small town on the east coast, before he was employed by a Dutch company at the harbour in Belawan in 1934.36

The white-collar worker not only became an ideal in the Toba community but with time also developed into a stereotype of Toba men in colonial Medan and on the east coast as a whole, adhered to by both the Toba themselves and other ethnic groups. An example of the power of the stereotype is that the Toba who lived in Medan before 1942 often speak as if no other Toba social groups existed in Medan at the time.

---

36 Penataleyanan yang Baik 1984, p. 17.
Circular migration – a migratory pattern among the Toba Batak?

Because of the stereotype of the white-collar worker in the Toba community, it is not easy to obtain information about those who did not work in the offices. It was the white-collar workers and their families who were the most prominent. By virtue of their status, they led the Christian congregation and communicated with the missionaries. In the sources, they dominate almost exclusively. It is meaningful to try to see through the stereotype, in order to gain a more complete picture of the Toba community in Medan.

Important source evidence comes from 1931, when a RMG missionary stationed in Medan made a special addendum to the yearly statistics in which he said that:

The figures should not be regarded as absolutely sure. There is a steady coming and going (of people). It often takes weeks before it is known who has moved or otherwise disappeared. The same applies to those who arrive. Unfortunately it has not come through to the people that they should bring a congregational certificate. Many remain silent (in order) not to be enrolled for payment of the Church fee.37

From this quotation, one can draw the conclusion that there was a sizeable group who did not live permanently in the city but stayed for a while and then returned home. The fact that they tried to avoid the Church fee is an indication that they did not have a stable financial position. Another reason might have been that they did not regard themselves as members of the congregation. The certificate was a paper from the home congregation, saying that the person in question was moving to Medan.

Medan was the main city of the region and attracted many individuals with great hopes. Among them was a number of Toba men who came to Medan to search for employment but did not have the necessary qualifications to work behind a desk. In the 1930s, Toba small-scale traders, unemployed young men and criminals lived in Medan.38 It is likely that they were present in the city at an earlier stage, although written sources do not explicitly refer to them. Their “unstable” existence in Medan contributed to the fact that they have not left traces in the sources.

38 See Chapter 5, section “Economic recession and continuing social differentiation”.
The RMG missionaries in general took a rather gloomy view of the experiences of these men. One of them wrote: “Many went there (to Medan) but many also returned, crushed in life and spirit. A sacrifice to the large town life of Medan.” This quotation shows that there were obviously Toba who could not adapt to life in Medan. Even though some might have had problems in adapting in a comparatively large and multiethnic city, the majority certainly returned because dreams of profitable employment had been crushed. Johannes Warneck throws more light on the migrants with what he has to say regarding some students at the Sipoholon seminary:

The dishonesty shows among those who do not reach the goal and now in disappointment run away from the narrow-minded conditions at home. Many of them run from their parents to loaf about on the east or the west coast, but they do not learn anything useful there. After some years they return home with fine trousers, watch-chains and other proofs of civilisation. It takes a long time before they have adapted to the simple life at home again. Not a few become totally spoiled abroad, convert to Mohammedanism or disappear all together in Medan or Singapore.

According to Warneck, the background of these migrants was that they had failed in education, in this case, the RMG teacher’s education. To escape from shame they avoided their families and “loafed about” outside Tapanuli. The expression implies that they worked for some years in less qualified jobs before they returned home.

Even though they were obviously ridiculed by Warneck and put forward as examples of undesirable behaviour, it is likely that these returnees could compensate their families. Through their new experiences and if they had been able to save some money and were relatively wealthy, they increased the prestige of their clan group and became suitable for a good marriage. In view of Warneck’s obvious attempt to discredit temporary migrants, one can be sure that it was not necessary to fail in one’s schooling or to be ashamed of your parents to try one’s luck in areas outside Tapanuli. Many young men spent a couple of years in the migration area, working as manual labourers or small-scale traders, before returning home.

39 “Viele gingen hin, viele aber auch kamen zurück, zerbrochen nach Leib und Seele. Ein Opfer des Großstadtlebens von Medan!” Müller, Jahresbericht über 1932, ressort Medan. BM 2.852. VEM.

The quotation is from a context in which migration from Pematang Siantar and its surroundings to Medan is discussed, but I think it is possible to use the statement in a general sense.

The discussion about Toba who were not white-collar workers relates to the problem of circular migration. O. H. S. Purba, who is leading a project on Toba migration at the HKBP Nommensen University in Medan, has suggested that in the context of migration people who returned home have to be studied.41 But, so far, no scholar has investigated the extent of circular migration among the Toba and whether it could be called a migratory pattern.

The problem of how to interpret the existence of those who lived for a period in Medan and then returned home remains. The above examples of Toba circular migration suggest that the simple scheme of migration suggested by Pelly needs to be complemented. One possible interpretation is that it was only when someone failed in the area of migration that they would try to compensate themselves before finally going home. It was then out of necessity, not according to a culturally conditioned pattern, that they went home. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that, for a large group of Toba lacking higher education, circular migration was a means of making use of opportunities that were available to make a better future at home. The ideal was still to establish one's own barajao, but in these cases the barajao could be built, not abroad, but in one's home area. To be sure, the main ideal was to become a white-collar worker, but in many cases the ideal was unattainable and there were other goals to reach.

Family formation and the migration of women

Up to this point, the discussion about Toba migrants has focused exclusively on the migration of men. In the available sources from this period, women are almost not mentioned at all, a fact that clearly demonstrates the low position of Toba women in Medan. The women who are mentioned are not referred to by name, but only as wives of men. Owing to the patriarchal structure of Toba society and of the RMG, men only were members of the church council and other committees of the congregation. Only men worked together with the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar, who was responsible for Medan. It was not until the 1930s that autonomous Toba women's organisations were founded in Medan and individual women were mentioned in written sources.42

Men dominated the community also in numbers. In 1915, the Toba congregation consisted of 53 women and 150 men.43 This meant that the women-men ratio was 1:3. On the other hand, the above example of people who did not want to register as members of the congregation indicates that the ratio in reality was

---

41 Interview, O. H. S Purba.
42 See Chapter 5, section “The emerging Toba Batak women's movement”.
43 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1915-16, p. 9. BM 2.867. VEM.
higher. It is likely that this pattern continued through the whole colonial period and that, although the ratio decreased with time, there were always more men than women in Medan. These statistics reflect the fact that the society of the east coast of Sumatra throughout the colonial period was to a very large extent a patriarchal one. 44

Regarding Toba women, it is possible and important to use the bits and pieces of information that are available, in order to discuss the premises on which women migrated to Medan. A more complete picture of the social characteristics of the Toba community in Medan during the first decades of the 20th century will appear.

Written sources often refer to single young men but never to single or married women who left their families to work in Medan. It would have been regarded, by both missionaries and the Toba, as a “problem”, had there been many single women in Medan. The exposed position of women on the east coast and the patriarchal values in Toba culture, that stressed women's dependence on men and their duties at home, would have supported this view. Such a “problem” is not referred to. It is therefore safe to assume that the women who migrated to Medan went together with their families.

In 1909, there was only one Toba family living in Medan. 45 Three years later, the number of women increased, because the men employed by Opiumregie were in most cases married. 46 The families connected with Opiumregie had a relatively high income and lived under more stable conditions than other Toba on the east coast. An indication of their status is that they are often referred to, in both missionary and Toba sources. One might say that they constituted a core group within the Toba community.

In 1915, the community also included 100 children aged 7-14. 47 The statistics on children show that the community, apart from unmarried men, consisted of young families.

The many unmarried men in Medan certainly had the desire to marry. Because marriage outside the ethnic group was, and still is, quite rare and is generally discouraged, the situation for the men who remained in Medan and had prestigious jobs made it imperative to recruit women from Tapanuli to join them.

Until the 1930s it was unheard of that a Toba couple married in Medan. 48 Most men followed a pattern whereby after some years in Medan they returned to their home village to obtain a wife, together with their parents. In this respect, the

44 See Chapter 1, section “The development of commercial agriculture”.
46 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1914, p. 9. BM 2.867. VEM.
47 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1915-16, p. 9. BM 2.867. VEM.
48 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
relations with the community in Tapanuli remained all-important. The fact that their son had obtained a good position with a good income in Medan had the effect that parents in Tapanuli had a much better bargaining position vis-à-vis parents whose daughters were potential candidates for marriage.

Toba adat encouraged marriage soon after puberty. It is, however, likely that the sons and their parents in many cases consciously delayed marriage until after the son had obtained employment in Medan. This would imply the possibility of increasing the prestige of the family. Their son's position in Medan meant that they now had the prospect of marrying him to a clan group to which they would otherwise not have had access. The number of girls whose parents were eager to marry off their daughters to a man working in Medan must have been large. The marriage of a daughter to such a man would bring prestige but also increase the level of the bride-price. Because marriage between cousins was generally considered to be the ideal form of marriage, the parents of the man's maternal cousins would certainly state their case. Some would certainly marry their cousins, especially if a maternal uncle had financed student fees. These dynamics imply that women who married and moved to Medan represented clan-groups of a high social standing.

The fact that marriages were arranged to a large extent does not imply that the young man and the young woman had objections to the arrangement. Even though it may be that some young couples who were in love have always eloped to escape the demands of their parents, the majority certainly did not. The western norm of romantic love had not yet made a great impact on young Toba. One can assume that the couple in most cases was satisfied with the arrangement. It meant that they were both able to increase the social status of their clan and of themselves and might even make them fall in love.

Compared with their husbands, women were not selected for marriage because of their education but because they belonged to the right clan-group. Many had no or little education, rarely above the level of the mission primary schools. This observation is confirmed in an episode in the late 1920s or early 1930s, when J. Sihombing was minister of the congregation in Medan:

In order to enrich the (life of the) congregation, the minister thought that hymns should be read on Sundays. The congregation bought hymnbooks to use at the Sunday service. Because of this, many women did not want to go to church any longer because they did not know how to read and were ashamed. The minister cared to invite them so that they would be taught to write. Our women were
eager to study and soon they knew how to read. They were pleased to go to church again because they were not illiterates any longer.49

The episode illustrates the prestige given to literacy in Medan and the eagerness with which women, who had not had the opportunity to study, accepted literacy as a norm. Today, illiteracy is no great problem when going to church in the countryside.50 But in Medan women in the 1920s aspired to the norm of literacy that had already been set by men.

Migration to Medan implied that the role of women in the community changed. Apart from taking care of the children, women in Tapanuli were relied on as the main work force in the village.51 From existing research, it is unclear whether in Tapanuli at the turn of the century there were women who had left working in the fields to become “housewives”. It is possible that such a development would apply to some wives of men who were employed by the local Dutch administration or the RMG. But at least the families of the teachers employed by the RMG kept fields to support themselves. Women certainly did the main work.52

For women, migration to Medan meant that they were incorporated in a monetary economy and the work pattern from Tapanuli was turned upside down. In Medan, women were outside the sphere of subsistence and became instead totally dependent on their husbands.

It is likely that the women thought that the transition was difficult, but at the same time most of them, in spite of problems of adapting in a new environment and to a new way of life, thought that the new prestige they had won provided good compensation. Old Toba women in Medan whom I have interviewed felt no regrets. They said that they were very happy with the fact that they had had opportunities to make progress. Like many other migrants, they thought that they had been somewhat uncertain about what moving to the city would imply. They had, on the other hand, great hopes for a more prosperous future, a future they were about to realise. In the Toba cultural perspective, marrying a man in Medan

49 Bat. “Asa lam tu majuna huria i, ninna roha ni pandita i, dipungka ma na so pola manjaha ende di parmingguan. Diparade huria i ma angka buku ende sipakeon ni angka parminggu. Alai ala ni i, gabe godang ma angka ina na so olo be ro marninggu, ai ndang diboto nasida manjaha, gabe maila nasida. Dihalojahon pandita i ma manjou ni nasida asa olo marguru dohot manurat. Pandita i sandiri do na mangajari. Ringgas do angka inanta i marguru, gabe hatop do diboto nasida majaha. Las ma rohanasi muse marninggu dung so butahuru be nasida.” Sianipar 1978, p. 68.
50 In congregations with a substantial number of illiterates, the teacher or choir leader reads the lines of the hymns before each line is sung.
51 Aritonang 1994, p. 126.
52 Aritonang says that it was difficult for the teacher to fulfil his duties to the RMG at the same time as, because of the insufficient salary, he had to work in the fields to make a living. Aritonang 1994, p. 147. Bearing in mind the important role of women in agriculture, it is more accurate to say that it was in fact the wife and daughters who took the main responsibility for this work.
had not only brought prestige to herself, but also to her own clan, by virtue of the relations forged between her and her husband's clan.

In Medan, the two roles of wife and mother were the primary roles available to women. Whatever activities they had left behind, they came to Medan primarily to be good wives and mothers and thus a new group of urban Toba housewives was formed. Given the circumstances, the urban housewife was a necessary corollary to the male white-collar worker in the formation of the Toba community in Medan.

The fact that women became housewives should not lead us to conclude that they had no influence outside their homes. A married woman in Toba society plays an important role as a mediator between clans, and the women in Medan took on the important task of maintaining good relations with both her and her husband's clan groups in Tapanuli.

The making of an urban Toba Batak elite

With reference to their social background, the urban Toba families can be seen as an extension of the local elite in Tapanuli, consisting of raja, the employees of the RMG and the staff of the Dutch administration. The men had had access to the HIS school and the women came from well-to-do families. Their migration was a sign that the elite had managed to take advantage of the new opportunities of progress that were offered.

However, I wish to emphasise that the Toba community in Medan at the same time represented a new elite. They were the first generation of Toba who lived outside Tapanuli and did not gain their subsistence from farming, the RMG or the local-government administration in Tapanuli. The small number of Toba who were employed as local colonial officers in Tapanuli certainly had prestigious positions, but they were still deeply embedded in the social system in Tapanuli. The migrants to Medan were removed from the social system and institutions in Tapanuli both in a geographical sense and in terms of employment. They had become part of the expanding capital of the plantation economy on the east coast.

As regarded language use, the migrants ventured into a region where Malay was the lingua franca among the indigenous population but where knowledge of Dutch provided the entrée into the offices. Even though most men knew Dutch, the main second language after Toba Batak was Malay.53

53 This is demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that the Toba in 1914 preferred that a Dutch minister who led services for them should use Malay. Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
Migration did not imply that they lost contact with or stood outside the social world of Tapanuli. Communication, in the form of persons, goods and money, was in time developed between Medan and Tapanuli. Marriage provided the most important example for the community. For comparison, Toba who migrated to Java generally lost more of the Toba heritage, such as Toba Batak language, because of the difficulty of upholding continuous relations with Tapanuli.54

When it came to the motives of these migrants, they were trying to fulfil their cultural ideals. When I have asked old Toba people why they or their parents decided to migrate to Medan, the answer has almost always been “to make progress” (Ind. *untuk maju* or *untuk kemajuan*). The answer indicates that migration to Medan was seen as part of the process of *hamajuon*, of striving to make progress on an individual and collective basis.

Migration implied that both men and women gained *hasangapon* (prestige) in relation to their clan mates in Tapanuli. Most likely they thought that they represented a distant, but special and prestigious, part of the Toba cosmos. The *bajajon* they looked for was not in the form of a separate household or village but instead a civil servant’s desk that would secure a good income. On the other hand, migration was not perceived only as an individual venture and the successful migration of a Toba had repercussions at home. The effect of a position in an office in Medan was that family and clan group gained in *hasangapon*.

The Toba historian Aritonang has proposed that the conversion of the Toba to Christianity should be seen as a process whereby the *hasangapon* of the *datu* (traditional healer) was transferred to the Toba employed by the RMG.55 In the case of the community in Medan, is it tempting to say that the *hasangapon* of the Toba teacher and minister in Tapanuli started to be superseded by that of the white-collar worker.

It is reasonable to assume that with prestige followed a strong sense of self-confidence, if not superiority, in relation to the social world of Tapanuli. One indication is that old men and women in Medan, when asked who migrated, would say “it was the clever and beautiful who migrated” or “those who migrated were those who possessed energy and initiative.”56 In general, indigenous urban dwellers in Medan, who had come from other parts of Sumatra, generally felt that they were taking part in a vibrant city culture, free from traditional authorities.57 The detailed list of board members of the Toba voluntary association mentioned ear-

---

56 Ind. “Orang yang merantau, inulah yang cantik dan pintar”, “Yang punya energi dan inisiatif merantau”.
57 Reid 1979, p. 59.
lier shows that the Toba office-workers were certainly proud and conscious of their newly acquired positions.

Not disclosing one’s identity

The discussion has until now focused mainly on the migration and social characteristics of the Toba group in Medan. They were, however, certainly not living in a vacuum and interacted with other ethnic groups. One therefore needs to put them in the framework of the ethnic dynamics of Medan.

During the first few decades of the 20th century, the Toba community remained a small minority, representing 1-2% of the total population. In Medan, the Toba were included in the “indigenous population” group and assigned to their parts of the city. The categorisation implied that the Toba in general lived among ethnic groups that were predominantly Muslim.

During the first two decades of Toba history in Medan, they did not own houses but instead lived as tenants. The landlords were from other, predominantly Muslim, ethnic groups, but were also Chinese, who owned houses in various parts of the town, and Indians in the Indian area (Kampung Keling). The reason why they were allowed to live in the Indian area was probably that they lived there only as tenants.

The Toba did not, like some other ethnic groups, have a specific area where they settled. The fact that they lived as tenants contributed to this condition. There were, however, certain areas with a higher concentration of Toba, presumably because there it was relatively easy and cheap for newcomers to obtain housing.

The first place where the Toba used to meet was in a house on Langkatstraat (the present Jalan Langkat). This street is situated in the north-eastern parts of the city. Later, quite a large number settled in Kampung Keling, the area where the Indian population lived. The area was a rather poor one and was considered relatively cheap. Another area where they settled was Kampung Petissah west of Kampung Keling. North of Petissah Toba lived in the Kampung SKIP. There were also those who lived on the eastern side of the railroad, near the central

---

58 See Table II.
59 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
60 Tampubolon 1937, p. 16.
61 Interview, W. Lumbantobing. Many street-names mentioned in the written sources are from Kampung Keling.
62 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
63 Many persons on a list of members in the RMG congregation in Medan lived there, see Ledenlijst. BM: 2.852. VEM.
market and the large Chinese area.64 Another area with a Toba concentration was
the so-called Jati Ulu area, north of Jatilaan (the present Jalan Perintis
Kemerdekaan). In this area, the Municipal Council in 1921 started to build homes
for the indigenous civil servants in the local administration.65 Another area of this
kind was the area of Sungai Rengas, bordering the south-eastern part of the
European area. In the 1930s, there were around 80% Christians in this small area.
They included Toba as well as Christian Ambonese and Menadonese from the
eastern parts of the Dutch colony.66

The Muslim population in Medan had to a large extent assimilated to the
dominant Malay-Muslim culture and expected newcomers to do the same. As
regards the Toba, they also had to accept the contempt with which Batak groups
in general were met in the lowlands on the east coast.67 These sentiments could,
in rare cases, lead to physical abuse. A man told me that he had once in the 1920s
been pushed to the ground outside a cinema by a man who shouted “Batak!”68

The Christian Batak furthermore had the problem that Christianity was thought
to be alien to the local Muslim culture. The oral tradition of the Toba community
in Medan, for instance, includes many stories of how they were initially mistreated
by prejudiced Muslims. On one occasion, a small group of Toba were thrown out
of a restaurant because they had said a Christian prayer.69

To avoid problems, the first Toba migrants concealed their ethnic and reli-
gious identity. According to Tampubolon:

Christian Batak who suffered in this way called themselves people from Mandarin and changed
their religion to become Muslims. They also changed their names so that Jonas became Junus,
Zakarias became Zakaria, Josef became Jusuf, etc.70

The reason why the Toba adopted the identity of Muslim Batak from Mandarin
must have been that the group was perceived as the Muslim ethnic group closest to
them. Most Toba at this time certainly spoke Malay with an accent influenced by the

---

64 The first Toba gathering on Langkatstraat is one example. In the 1920s, one interest group in the
Toba congregation was said to live in this area. Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
65 Sinar 1991, p. 66.
67 See Chapter 1, section “A regional historical context: local powers and European colonisation”.
68 Interview, W. Lumbantobing. He did not know how he was recognised as a Batak.
69 Tampubolon 1937, p. 8.
70 Bat. “Tarpaksa ma antong angka dongan Christen Batak na targogot i mangaku Mandarin jala
marbalik godang gabe Islam. Dipauha ma dohot goar, umpamana Jonas gabe Junus, Zakarias gabe
Zakaria, Joseph gabe Jusuf dohot la@on na asing i.” Tampubolon 1937, p. 9.
intonation of their mother tongue. Their association with Mandailing meant that they could explain their accent with reference to this group. It is very likely that some Toba permanently gave up their identity, in the sense that they actually converted to Islam. On the other hand, most of them probably secretly remained Christian, while in daily life their neighbours assumed that they were Muslims.

The RMG strategy towards Medan

Missionary perceptions of the east coast

After the RMG had established its mission around Lake Toba in the later decades of the 19th century, they expanded in the Simalungun area during the first few years of the 20th. The area had been colonised by the Dutch a few decades earlier.

In this area, the RMG started to work among the numerous, Toba rural migrants but also pursued its mission among the local Simalungun Batak. They worked with the permission of the Dutch authorities and in association with local raja who were sympathetic to the establishment of the mission. The people in Simalungun were regarded by the RMG as a part of the Batak people that should be included in the Batak People's Church. The sympathy of the raja was to a large extent conditioned by their expectations that the mission would establish schools.

The first RMG missionaries who worked in Simalungun were G. Simon and A. Theis. Simon was in 1903 stationed in Tiga Ras on the eastern coast of Lake Toba, while Theis settled in the kingdom of Raja. Another pioneering missionary was Eduard Müller, who in 1908 started to work in Pematang Siantar in the kerajaan Siantar. The city had been made the centre of Dutch administration in Simalungun. The raja had converted to Islam but allowed the missionary to settle in his kingdom. It is not too far-fetched to assume that the chief accepted missionaries in order to establish good relations with the new dominant rulers. Müller worked mainly among Toba migrants but also tried to convert Simalungun Batak. He started a special school for sons of the raja, a school intended to bring leaders under Christian influence.

---

71 Even today, many Toba speak Indonesian with an accent that is recognisable. During my stay in Medan, it even happened a few times that people from other ethnic groups, admittedly after I had told them that I was studying Toba history, thought that my own way of speaking Indonesian had a Toba "flavour".
73 Warneck 1913, pp. 168, 170.
74 Warneck 1913, p. 180.
75 Warneck 1913, p. 180.
The mission in the Simalungun region, where Islam and Christianity competed to convert traditional religionists, was seen by the RMG to a large extent as a struggle against Islam. The best known example is G. Simon, who in his writings regarded the expansion of "fanatical Muslims" as the main threat to the mission. The presence of Islam implied that it was difficult to implement the ideal of the People's Church.

With regard to the east coast of Sumatra the strength of the Malayo-Muslim culture meant that missionaries in general took a negative view of the area. Warneck wrote that:

The east coast of Sumatra with the harbours Asahan and Medan is from old Mohametan. They have founded large sultanates that have incorporated the many small chiefdoms of Batak origin and acquired undue power and importance. Mohammedans there are eager to spread their religion and sphere of influence.

In relation to the Toba who migrated into urban centres on the east coast, the RMG faced a new situation. The east coast was dominated by ethnic groups who could not be included in the Batak People’s Church. The Batak in the area had generally converted to Islam, which implied that a large-scale mission among them was not realistic. The strong position of the Malay Sultans also had the effect that the Dutch administration was generally not willing to allow mission work on the east coast. There were, in other words, important religious and political obstacles to the RMG to enlarge its mission beyond Simalungun onto the east coast region.

In spite of not being able to enlarge its mission, the RMG still had to consider how to relate to the increasing number of well-educated Toba migrants on the east coast. A strong incentive to do so was the number of "dangers" that in the missionary view threatened these migrants.

The presence of Islam meant that there was a fear that the Toba would convert to Islam. In Tapanuli, there were rumours that Toba migrants had become Muslims. Life in cities like Medan was also thought to have a negative moral

---

76 See, for instance, Simon 1910.
78 The main exception is the Methodist mission among the Chinese.
79 Tampubolon 1937, p. 10.
influence. Warneck, for instance, was convinced that: "... everywhere in the world, a large number of bad people gather in coastal towns and trade centres."\textsuperscript{80}

RMG missionaries who lived in the ethnically homogenous countryside in Tapanuli thought that life in Medan was materialistic and morally suspect. In their attempts to purify Toba culture and society in Tapanuli, migration to Medan meant that the Toba migrants were no longer under their control and ran the risk of being "polluted".

A further "danger" was that migrants would join other denominations that were active in Medan, in particular, the Catholic Church and the Methodist mission. During the first decade of the century, the Toba increasingly made contacts with these two organisations, a development that the RMG missionaries were well aware of.\textsuperscript{81}

Another element in the RMG thinking was the generally negative attitude to migration, conditioned by their adherence to the idea that the Batak Volk was in essence bound to a specific territory. The missionaries generally thought that Toba migrants were motivated by unspiritual motives. Instead, they should remain in North Tapanuli, where, under the leadership of the missionaries, they would develop their moral and spiritual life and their culture. The RMG missionaries therefore continuously appealed to the Toba to remain in their ancestral land. They even wrote songs that were used in schools and were aimed at strengthening the love of the homeland.\textsuperscript{82} It is obvious that the RMG thought that the primary identity of the Toba was in Tapanuli and should remain there.

From these examples, it is evident that the perceptions of the east coast among RMG missionaries and Toba migrants were very different. To the missionaries, rural Tapanuli was their natural habitat and the east coast an alien milieu, where moral and spiritual temptations were encountered. To Toba migrants, life on the east coast certainly presented problems. But to them the region where they had decided to settle was basically a new and exciting "land of opportunity". RMG warnings and efforts to stop migration were not heeded and could not deter them in their pursuit of harajaon and hasangapon.

\textsuperscript{80} "... denn überall in der Welt strömt an den Küsten und Handelsplätzen schlechtes Gesindel zusammen." Warneck 1912, p. 39. The remark was made in a context in which Toba trade with Baros was being discussed. But because of its explicit general character, the statement can be applied to other coastal cities too.

\textsuperscript{81} For a short summary of the efforts of other mission organisations based on RMG sources, see Aritonang 1994, p. 167, n. 38.

\textsuperscript{82} Aritonang 1994, pp. 235f.
RMG ambivalence and co-operation with the Protestantsche Kerk

At the turn of the century, the RMG missionaries were unaware of any Toba living in Medan. In 1907, Müller visited the city from Pematang Siantar, but he reported nothing about the presence of Toba. He would certainly have done so, had he met with or heard of any. It is also unknown whether the decision by some Toba from a cultural group to remain in Medan a year later was known to the missionaries.

A few years later, the awareness of the urban migrants had increased. At the Missionary Conference held in January 1911, a special session was devoted to the question of migration. Müller informed the Conference about the situation in Medan, and suggested that the RMG should start a school and place a Toba teacher there. These proposals were approved of. The RMG board of directors in Barmen supported the initiative. By virtue of his position at the RMG mission station closest to Medan, Müller was thought to be responsible for Medan. He could have obtained his information at first hand during a visit to Medan or been informed by Toba who visited Pematang Siantar. Müller’s presentation was probably focused on the situation for youngsters who came to Medan for schooling. The suggestion to establish a school in Medan was a means of trying to shelter them from the “dangers” that they encountered in Medan. Owing to the dual function of the teacher, the decision also implied that the spiritual care of these youngsters should be given priority. However, during the coming year, the RMG did not act upon these decisions.

The initiative that made the RMG begin to implement its plans was instead taken by the Rev. Klaassen, the Dutch minister of the Protestantsche Kerk in Medan. He had become acquainted with the Toba who visited his congregation for worship and was using his contacts within the Dutch community to provide them with employment. In late 1911, he advertised in the Dutch press on the east coast for supporters for work among the Toba in Medan. In this way, he obtained the names of about 20 Europeans willing to contribute a sum each month.

---

83 See Müller to Inspector, Bandar 9 November 1907. BM 1.992. VEM.
84 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz Sipoholon 1911. BM 2.890. VEM.
85 Deputation RMG to Konferenz Rheinische Missionare, Barmen 31 May 1911. BM 2.890. VEM. The support from the board of directors was not a mere formality. It is true that the central board in Germany often did little more than approve of decisions that the local leadership had already made. On the other hand, it sometimes happened that the central board strongly objected to decisions, especially those regarding financial matters.
86 Tampubolon 1937, p. 23.
to the cause. It is likely that most of these Europeans were active Christians, mainly members of the Protestantsche Kerk, who thought that it was a duty to support indigenous fellow Christians. The action was also in line with the role of the Church as the unitary Protestant Church in the colony with some responsibilities towards indigenous Christians.

Klassen motivated his initiative by saying that: “the spiritual care of the Christian Batak here has to be undertaken in their own language, so that they would keep the faith and not perish in the worldly maelstrom in Medan.” Creating a separate ethnic congregation among the Toba would, in other words, counteract the temptations of Medan. In relation to the development of the Toba community, Klaassen must have responded to the substantial increase that occurred in late 1911, when a large number of Toba were employed by Opiumregie.

When he had secured the financial basis for his initiative, Klaassen sent a letter to the RMG Missionary Conference held in February 1912, in which he requested that a Toba teacher be sent to Medan. In response the Conference decided that Müller should send the teacher Josia Hutabarat to Medan. It also acknowledged the need to send one or two missionaries to the migration area (Ausswandertengebiet). The decision to station a teacher in Medan was implemented during the year, and 1 August 1912 Josia Hutabarat arrived in Medan to take up his new position.

Regarding the RMG Missionary Conferences of 1911 and 1912 and the decisions made, there are a few points that need further discussion. The main question is why it was more than a year after the annual conference of 1911 that the RMG started to implement the decisions made in that year. The main reason appears to have been the independent initiative of a Dutch minister in Medan.

---

87 There were about 25, according to Tampubolon 1937, pp. 23, but only 20, according to Müller, Müller to Inspector, Pematang Siantar 12 October 1912 BM 1.992. VEM.
88 Müller at the time thought in general that Europeans on the east coast were not very keen to engage themselves in mission work, but willingly supported a variety of social work. Müller to Inspektor, Pematang Siantar 27 November 1913. BM 1.992. VEM. In Tampubolon 1937 Klaassen does not mention his campaign in the press, only that he obtained the support from members of his congregation. See Klaassen's written greeting in Tampubolon 1937, p. xii.
89 “... at er voor de verzorging der Christen-Bataks ter stede in hun eigen taal iets gedaan moest worden, opdat zij het geloof zouden kunnen behouden en niet ondergaan in de maalstoom der wereld in Medan ...” Quotation from Klaassen's written greeting in Tampubolon 1937, p. xii. Klaassen is here recapitulating his initiative 25 years earlier.
90 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz Sipoholon 1912, p. 17. BM 2.890. VEM. It is not clear whether Ausswandertengebiet referred only to the east coast of Sumatra or also to other areas, such as Tanah Alas or Sipirok, to which Tobe had also migrated. About the decision to station Hutabarat in Medan, see also Tampubolon 1937, p. 23.
91 Tampubolon 1937, p. 23.
The answer to this question will highlight basic elements in the attitude of the RMG missionaries towards the work in the capital of the east coast.

One way of explaining the delay is to say that decisions were regarded only as recommendations to be implemented later. In that case, the grandiose plan to station missionaries in the migration area pointed to a definite need rather than a concrete line of action.

To assess the issue properly, it is, however, important to take the characteristically ambiguous wordings of the missionary documents into account. The Missionary Conference in 1912, for instance, motivated the decision to assign a teacher to Medan by mentioning the need to “give in to our people” (unseren Leute nachgeben). Furthermore, the plan to station missionaries in the unspecified area of migration was accompanied by a statement that the Conference was not able to make any binding decisions on the subject and that missionaries in any case did not suffer from lack of work.92 The support that the board in Barmen gave to the plans was also immediately followed by a statement on the need to restrain migration out of Tapanuli.93

Even though the minutes of RMG missionary conferences do not explicitly show differences of opinion, the ambiguous statements indicate that the main reason for the delay was that some or even a large number of RMG missionaries opposed the plans.

The ideal of the People’s Church also had an impact. With regard to this ideal, Medan was outside “Batakland”, i.e. the territory which the missionaries were used to regarding as “theirs”. A willingness to use the limited resources of the mission outside “its own area” should not be taken for granted. The fact that the costs of living were very much higher in Medan than in Tapanuli would only have strengthened this line of thought. After 1914 the willingness to use RMG resources in Medan must have declined even more because of the severe RMG financial crisis.94

The argument that finally persuaded the missionaries to send a teacher to Medan was that financial support had already been arranged. This meant that work in Medan did not demand additional money from the RMG funds95. Presumably the sum collected by Klaassen was enough to provide the salary of the teacher and the expenses of his travels to visit Toba on the east coast outside Medan. The Protestantsche Kerk was also thought of as a suitable partner by virtue of its close ties with the colonial administration.

92 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz Sipoholon 1912, p. 17. BM 2.890. VEM.
93 Deputation RMG to Konferenz Rheinische Missionare, Barmen 31 May 1911, p. 11. BM 2.890. VEM.
94 On this crisis, see Chapter 2, section “Toba Batak financial support and RMG crisis”.
95 This point was later highlighted by Müller. Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1919. BM 2.852. VEM.
The basic attitude of the RMG missionaries towards work in Medan can be characterised as one of ambivalence. In their perspective, the growing number of urban Toba, mainly young and educated males, ran the risk of being lost to the Church, a situation that demanded their attention. On the other hand, the limited financial resources of the mission, the comity regulations and the idea that their primary work-area was limited to North Tapanuli had the effect that wholehearted support for work in Medan was difficult to mobilise. The following chapters will reveal that this ambivalent attitude towards Medan conditioned the work of the RMG during the whole Dutch colonial period.

Within the RMG structure, Hutabarat was formally under the authority of the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar in the Simalungun District of the mission. But the mission realised from the start that he could not travel to Medan frequently. The geographical distance between the two cities and the general workload of the missionary implied that he could visit Medan only a couple of times annually. In 1914, before the railway reached Pematang Siantar, Müller also complained that it was expensive to travel to the city.96 In 1922, Müller’s successor claimed that he intended to visit Medan once every three months.97 It is highly likely that he did not manage to go there so often.

In order to alleviate some problems of communication Hutabarat was instructed to send parts of his diary to the missionary in Pematang Siantar.98 The role of the missionary was to examine Hutabarat’s work in the diary and make up broad directives to guide the work in Medan. The more direct supervision of the Toba would be the responsibility of the minister of the Protestantsche Kerk. Because Hutabarat was a layperson, the main duty of the minister was to administer the sacraments to the Toba community.99 Furthermore, Hutabarat had to "visit the Dutch minister twice every week to receive his instructions and to talk about urgent necessities."100 For the Toba teacher, co-operation with the Protestantsche Kerk included an additional duty, namely to care spiritually for the Christians from Ambon and Menado who were members of the congregation.101 While they worshipped together with the Dutch on Sundays, the Protestantsche Kerk had not appointed a Dutch or indigenous minister whose main duty would be to work among these ethnic groups. They therefore asked Müller if Hutabarat would assume this responsibility. For the same reason, some Dutch employees from the local admin-

96 Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
97 Lotz, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1922. BM 2.867. VEM.
98 Müller to Inspector, Pematang Siantar 12 October 1912. BM 1.992. VEM.
99 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1912. BM 2.867. VEM.
100 "Wöchentlich 2 mal geht Josia zum Dominee und holt sich seine Instruktionen und bespricht mit diesem das Nötigste."
101 For these Christians, see Chapter 1, section “Early Church History of Medan”.
istration also contacted Müller. They may have been the superiors of the indigenous Christians who had been asked by their subordinates to arrange worship for them. A possible motive was that Christians from the eastern archipelago preferred to use Malay, a language that Hutabarat probably mastered better than the Dutch minister. Müller accepted the suggestion and hoped that this service would lead to some kind of financial gratification from the local administration. In practice, the arrangement meant that Hutabarat started to hold Bible studies for Ambon and Menado Christians twice a week.

In late 1913, the Rev. Klaassen was transferred to Java. His successor, the Rev. Nuis, who arrived in Medan in January 1914, declared that he also would accept responsibility for the Toba in Medan. He appears to have had good intentions and the Toba were allowed to hold Sunday services in the church in the afternoon, when the Dutch had ended worship. According to Müller, the willingness of the Dutch congregation to let the Toba congregation use their church was motivated by the fact that they “wanted to give the Batak a feeling of the unity of Christians.”

Despite these positive sentiments, there are indications that relations between the Toba and the Protestantsche Kerk during the following years were not close. The clergy of the Protestantsche Kerk generally stayed for 2-3 years each in Medan. It is likely that they did not have long-lasting plans for the work in Medan and did not try to expand the work or involve themselves too much in activities that were not considered central to the work of the congregation.

In 1914 the Toba congregation petitioned the RMG that Hutabarat should be ordained as a minister. The RMG accepted the proposal and Hutabarat obtained a dispensation to be ordained without having to enter the seminary in Sipoholon. Instead, he studied for two months under the missionary Theis in Raja in Simalungun. He was ordained at the end of 1914.

Theis reported that: "I hold it for certain that Josia from this time on will understand his work. With his knowledge I was also rather pleased."
These procedures show that the missionaries thought that Hutabarat was urgently needed in Medan. On the other hand, they would not have agreed to this special measure if they had not thought that Hutabarat was competent enough and did not need more education before ordination. It is likely that the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar supported the initiative, which had the effect that he would not be needed in Medan to administer the sacraments.

With regard to the building up of infrastructure for the Toba congregation, Müller initially planned to buy a piece of land for the congregation and hoped for support from Deli Maatschappij, the major plantation company of the region. The problem facing the mission was that land in Medan was very costly, compared with the countryside, where the RMG did most of its work. Müller did not explicitly say what kind of plans he had, but it seems that he intended to build a small church and a house for the teacher. For the moment, Hutabarat and his family lived as tenants in Sei Kerah in the north-eastern part of the city. The hopes of obtaining a piece of land from the large plantation company turned out to be in vain. The company did not provide land and it is not even known if Müller ever approached them with a formal request.

In 1914, Müller tried to solve the problem by approaching the Chinese mayor Tjong A Fie. He was the richest person on the east coast, the largest private landowner in Medan and a well-known patron of the construction of religious buildings. The German missionary eventually persuaded him to donate a piece of land, worth fl. 3-3500 to the congregation. The land was on Julianastraat (the present Jalan Asia) in the south-eastern part of the city.

In order to complete the undertaking to build facilities for the congregation a substantial sum was needed. The Toba in Medan had in 1913 started to donate money to build a church. Collections from congregations in Tapanuli were also initiated. But these efforts raised only a small part of the fl. 8000 that were required to complete the project. The lack of resources had the effect that construction work did not start and eventually Tjong A Fie withdrew the offer.

---

112 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1912. BM 2.867. VEM.
113 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
114 Tampubolon 1937, p. 27. Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1912. BM 2.867. VEM.
115 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
116 See Chapter 1, section “The ethnic geography of Medan”.
117 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1915. BM 2.867. VEM.
119 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1916. BM 2.867. VEM.
Obviously, neither the RMG nor the congregations in Tapanuli had enough interest or resources to support a project to build up the infrastructure of the Toba congregation in Medan. In 1914, the acute financial crisis of the RMG made it even more unlikely that they would consider providing funds to Medan.

The general financial situation of the congregation was also affected by the outbreak of World War I. In 1914, a planned collection for the Toba congregation among Europeans on the east coast had to be cancelled. Europeans were more interested in caring for the needs of their home countries, through the Red Cross or national collections for the Netherlands or Germany. The war also had the effect that the number of Europeans on the east coast decreased and consequently the number of benefactors.

A change of host: The Gereformeerde Kerken

In 1919, co-operation with Protestantsche Kerk became more difficult to maintain and eventually came to an end. In that year, the new minister, the Rev. Langen, declared that he would not support the Toba congregation. Instead money would be used to support Christian social work (Diakonie). Müller thought that Langen “… did not have any interest in mission and the Batak congregation whatsoever (and) furthermore publicly declared himself to be against the mission …”.

It is not explicitly stated what kind of convictions led the minister to adopt a negative attitude to co-operating with the Toba congregation. But it is likely that he and the rest of the congregation felt that their primary duty in a time of war in Europe was to support their less fortunate countrymen at home.

The development highlights a basic problem in relations between the RMG, the Toba congregation and the minister of the Protestantsche Kerk. The main duty of the Dutch clergy was to take care of the Dutch congregation and to a lesser extent the indigenous Christians from the eastern parts of the colony. When the new minister did not want to continue to support the Toba congregation, it was in peril, even more so since the RMG from the start of the work in Medan had relied exclusively on the resources and contacts of the Protestantsche Kerk. The development also caused a crisis in the relations between the RMG and the Toba congregation, a crisis to which I shall return in the next section.

121 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
122 Tampubolon 1937, p. 32.
123 Tampubolon 1937, p. 32.
124 “… hatte nicht nur absolut kein Interesse für die Mission und die Gemeinde, er erklärte sich vielmehr öffentlich gegen die Mission ….”
In order to solve the problem for the Toba congregation in Medan, Müller came to the conclusion that another Dutch sponsor was needed. He approached the church council of the newly formed congregation of the Gereformeerde Kerken and asked them to assume responsibility for the Toba congregation. The congregation was small but had good contacts in the Netherlands and some prominent members among the Europeans. The fact that, very soon after they had decided to found the congregation, they were able to build a church showed that they had good financial resources, a valuable asset in the eyes of the RMG missionary.

After Müller had approached them, the church council of the Gereformeerde congregation agreed to become the new patron of the Toba congregation. In practice, the arrangement implied that the minister of the Gereformeerde congregation became “the spiritual leader” (seelsorger) of the congregation and that the Dutch congregation would pay the salary of the Toba minister. The Toba congregation would still be under the auspices of the RMG and the missionary in Pematang Siantar would have the right to take part in church council decisions regarding the Toba congregation. The Gereformeerde congregation probably accepted the new responsibility, because the care for the Batak Christians was thought of as a manifestation of Christian solidarity with the indigenous Christians and as an “ethical” undertaking. Furthermore, members of Gereformeerde Kerken in Medan saw a parallel between themselves and the Toba. They regarded themselves as a group of scattered (verstrooide) members of their home church and in the Gereformeerde documentation the Toba are also several times referred to as “scattered”. Therefore members of the congregation could to a certain extent identify themselves with the Toba, who had lived away from home, scattered in a new area.

The arrangement was of a wholly practical nature. The facts that the RMG was a Pietistic inter-confessional, mission society and the Gereformeerde Kerken a Church that stressed traditional reformed doctrine and the duty of the Church as such to pursue mission work appears to have been irrelevant.

Despite the arrangement made between the RMG and the Gereformeerde Kerk in Medan, the Rev. Harrenstein, whom the congregation had recruited in the...
Netherlands, was doubtful, if not negative, about co-operation with the Toba. He stated several times that the council "did not dare to refuse" Müller's suggestion.\textsuperscript{130} It can be assumed that Harrenstein thought that the duty had been accepted without his full consent, which made him unwilling to co-operate with the Toba. Later, he seems to have changed his mind and personally contributed the minister's salary.\textsuperscript{131}

Harrenstein's successor appears to have had very little contact with the Toba congregation. Reports that he sent to the central mission office of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands do not mention the Toba at all.\textsuperscript{132} He obviously thought that there was no need to develop contacts with them any further than to provide the financial means and a place to worship. It is likely that he did not take very seriously the duty to supervise the minister's work.

On the other hand, the members of the Dutch congregation declared that they were willing to contribute to the material needs of the Christian Batak. In 1919, they initiated a plan to build a separate Christian Batak kampung in the city.\textsuperscript{133} Müller had already taken part in a similar project in Pematang Siantar, where he initiated a Christian area, the so-called Kampung Kristen.\textsuperscript{134}

In Medan, a committee was set up which included some Toba, such as the Rev. Hutabarat, and Europeans, led by Müller and Harrenstein. They applied to the Municipal Council, of which Harrenstein was a member, with a request that the local administration would initiate the building of 80 houses in Jati Ulu, where many Toba already lived, and supply 90% of the costs. Later, the number of houses in the application was reduced to 40. In the end, these ambitious plans did not materialise and in 1922 the Municipal Council finally rejected the proposal.\textsuperscript{135}

The fact that Toba were involved in this way shows that the project had support among them. They must have felt that they would benefit from living together, but, more importantly, they hoped that such a project would give them the opportunity of cheaper housing and prospects of actually owning houses themselves. They would no longer be dependent on other people and would have fulfilled the cultural ideal of *manjae* (establishing their own household). The failure meant that during the colonial period no separate Toba *kampung* was formed in Medan.

\textsuperscript{130} "durften toen niet te weigeren". See Harrenstein to Generale Deputaten, Medan 22 December 1918 and 15 February 1920. GDZ: Medan. AGK.

\textsuperscript{131} Tampubolon 1937, pp. 34f.

\textsuperscript{132} See Wiersinga to Generale Deputaten, Medan 3 January 1924 and 17 March 1925. GDZ: Medan. AGK. These two are the only letters of Wiersinga from Medan kept in the archives of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Leusden.

\textsuperscript{133} Tampubolon 1937, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{134} Aritonang 1994, p. 183, n. 61.
The pioneering work of the Rev. Josia Hutabarat

Up to this point in the discussion, I have devoted my primary attention to the RMG efforts to establish and provide a framework for the Toba congregation in Medan. Now my attention will be turned to the role of Josia Hutabarat in regard to his relations with the European missionaries and ministers and his role in the Toba community.

Relating to missionaries and ministers

**Hutabarat's background and ordination.** Hutabarat was born in Sait ni Huta, a village near Tarutung in the Silindung Valley. He studied for two years in Tapanuli to become a teacher, probably at the seminary in Pansur na Pintu, where the well-known missionary Johannsen taught. Hutabarat was then admitted to the Depok teachers' seminary run by the Protestantsche Kerk, near Jakarta. Johannsen had worked for that seminary and it is likely that he thought that Hutabarat was a promising candidate and decided to recommend him. He studied there in from 1880 to 1883.

In the Toba community teachers educated at Depok were generally preferred to others because they spoke Malay fluently. Furthermore, they had experience and knowledge of the world outside Tapanuli. On the other hand, the RMG missionaries generally did not appreciate these qualities and emphasised that teachers educated at Depok had become alienated from their culture. An additional reason why the missionaries were dubious about the qualities of these teachers was probably that their broad experiences and newly won status in Toba society had in many cases made them more independent and difficult to command by the RMG missionaries, who were used to having complete authority over the indigenous employees.

---

135 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 36f. Müller, Bericht Medan 1919. BM 2.852. VEM.
136 On Johannsen and the Pansur na Pintu seminary, see Aritonang 1994, pp. 140f.
137 According to Tampubolon and Müller, Hutabarat studied at Depok. Tampubolon 1937, p. 23. Müller to Inspector, 2 February 1910. BM 1.992. VEM. The only entry in the available lists of students at Depok that matches is Josua Huta Barat who studied there from 1880 to 1883. CD: Kweekelingen Seminari Depok, naamlijst 1878-1904, entry no. 23. ARZ. The entries of the graduates from the seminary include reports, from themselves or the missionaries who led the work, about their activities after graduation. If the identification of the Rev. Josia Hutabarat with the student Josua Hutabarat is correct, Tampubolon's statement that he was born in 1873 must be wrong, see Tampubolon 1937, p. viii. He was instead probably born about 1863.
138 The source quoted by Aritonang uses the term "Indonesian".
139 Aritonang 1994, pp. 144f., n. 76.
140 Aritonang 1994, p. 191.
After graduation from Depok, Hutabarat returned to Tapanuli and until 1899 worked in the area around Tarutung. In 1891, he also completed a theological course held by the missionaries. He thus added more training to his already relatively high education. He also had a good knowledge of Toba adat and some knowledge of medicine. These abilities certainly facilitated his efforts to make contact with and gain the confidence of the people with whom he was working. In 1910, he worked with Müller in Pematang Siantar. Thus, he was among the first Toba teachers stationed in Simalungun. The fact that he was trusted with the task of working in a new area indicates that he was a capable teacher, and generally trusted by the missionaries.

In 1912, Hutabarat had already worked for almost 20 years as a teacher for the RMG. One can assume that his education, the abilities which he had shown in the work outside Tapanuli and his command of Malay were the reasons why the missionary conference decided to station him as the first employee of the RMG in Medan.

During the first year in Medan, Hutabarat and the Toba congregation related to the Rev. Klaassen. It appears that the generally positive and active attitude of the Dutch minister, symbolised by his efforts to provide employment and to obtain funds for the work in Medan, implied that he related to the Toba in a positive way. An indication of his good reputation among the Toba is that his personal greeting to the congregation was included in the jubilee volume when the congregation in 1937 celebrated its 25th jubilee.

At the beginning of 1914, the Rev. Klaassen was replaced by the Rev. Nuis, who had a more difficult task connecting with the Toba congregation than his predecessor. The main problem was that he did not speak Malay and could read only the most necessary formulae in that language during baptisms and funerals. The Toba obviously preferred that the minister should use Malay instead of Dutch, because Malay was understood by a larger contingent of the congregation.

The inability of the new minister to hold services to the liking of the Toba was then one reason why the congregation decided to petition the RMG to arrange for Hutabarat to be ordained. Another incentive was that the community felt it was not acceptable that they had to wait until Dutch ministers or RMG missionaries had time to visit them in order to administer the sacraments. The Toba in

141 CD: Kweekelingen Seminar Depok, naamlijst 1878-1904, entry no. 23. ARZ.
142 Tampubolon 1937, p. 27. Medicine was a subject in the curriculum of Pansur na Pintu, where Hutabarat probably studied. See the Pansur na Pintu curriculum in Aritonang 1994, p. 140.
143 Müller to Inspector, Pematang Siantar 2 February 1910. BM 1.992. VEM.
144 See Klaassen's written greeting in Tampubolon 1937, p. xii.
145 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM.
Medan in other words felt somewhat neglected by the European ministers and missionaries. In this situation, they preferred to manage their congregational life themselves and that their teacher should become a minister.

The ordination of Hutabarat meant that the congregation could manage itself to a large extent. It is likely that, after ordination, Hutabarat did not need to visit the Dutch minister, at least not often, in order to receive instructions about his work. In relation to the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar, he may have continued to send his diary to the missionary. But in practice Hutabarat on most of the issues facing him had to make up his mind and take his own decisions. He could, in other words, to a large extent work independently, without close supervision by any European missionary or minister. This situation was very different from that of the Toba ministers and teachers in Tapanuli, who were supervised closely by the RMG missionaries.

Müller does not appear to have objected to this development, regardless of the fact that he could not have done much to impose his authority continuously in distant Medan. The missionary had worked together with Hutabarat for some years before the latter was stationed in Medan. It seems that Müller thought that the minister could manage quite well without direct missionary interference. When demands for more Toba influence in the Church grew strong in the 1920s, Müller was one missionary who was moderately positive to these demands.\textsuperscript{147} It is possible that this positive inclination grew out of his experiences of giving some indigenous clergy more responsibility than was generally the case.

\textbf{Financial crisis and conflict with European authority.}\ Despite the autonomous position of Hutabarat, the financial dependence on the Dutch congregation remained. The Dutch minister continued to arrange for Hutabarat's salary and his expenses. Developments connected with the outbreak of World War I would, however, gradually highlight the problem of being dependent on European support. As an effect of the war, it became increasingly difficult to obtain aid for the congregation from the European community. To support their home countries emerged as an important priority and the number of European benefactors decreased. In order to supplement the decreasing resources, the Toba in Medan and Arnhemia collected money to support Hutabarat.\textsuperscript{148} The effort appears to have been undertaken once and was not successful in obtaining a more permanent support for the minister. During the coming years, it is likely that the financial burden of Hutabarat's salary was shared between the remaining European benefactors and the Toba community.

\textsuperscript{147} Aritonang 1994, pp. 245f.
\textsuperscript{148} Tampubolon 1937, p. 32.
In April 1918, the situation worsened when the minister of the Protestantsche Kerk left his position. It was not until 1919 that the new minister was installed. The effect was that the money collected for Hutabarat ran out and that "the minister did not obtain much." Since the minister of the Protestantsche Kerk was responsible for managing the funds collected for Hutabarat, the long period without the presence of a Dutch minister in Medan meant that the support for the Toba minister decreased even more.

The final blow (Bat. tombom) to the congregation came when the new Dutch minister declared that he would not support them any longer. Instead, the money would be used for social work (Diakonie). Funds would probably be used among people in the Netherlands.

In this situation, the congregation turned to Tapanuli in an effort to obtain funds from the missionary organisation Zending Batak. No funds were available here because of a conflict between the organisation and the European leadership of the mission. A contributing factor was that the RMG preferred that its resources in a time of financial crisis should be used mainly for tasks in Tapanuli. Furthermore, the system of paying salaries directly to the Toba ministers had obviously not been introduced.

The inability to obtain sufficient funds had the effect that Hutabarat's situation appeared to be even more unstable and must have increased the sentiment in the community that they were being neglected by the Europeans, from whom they had counted on support. In this situation of financial uncertainty and discontent, an initiative appeared that challenged the existing European framework of the congregation.

According to Tampubolon the suggestion was made that Toba, because of the lack of money for the minister, should unite with the Ambon and Menado Christians of the Protestantsche Kerk. The original initiative is said to have come from the latter group. Even though it is likely that Tampubolon in relation to the RMG intended to underline that the other indigenous Christians came up...
with the original initiative, they had according to the same source their own motives. They were discontented with the fact that they worshipped with the Dutch but had no representative body of their own.\textsuperscript{154} It is also likely that they too suffered from the decreasing interest of the European community and had fewer resources than they were used to. The suggestion was that the groups would together found a separate congregation called the Malay Service (Maleische Dienst) and ask the government to fund Hutabarat's salary. Hutabarat supported the plan, which implied that the Toba would join the Protestantsche Kerk.\textsuperscript{155} With regard to the name of the proposed congregation, it implied that a special “service” would be initiated for the Malay-speaking, indigenous Christians.

The basis of the initiative was that both groups were discontented with their influence in Church matters and the support that they thought that they deserved from European ministers and missionaries. The two groups had come into contact when the Toba had visited the Dutch service of the Protestantsche Kerk. For instance, in 1912 they had celebrated Christmas together.\textsuperscript{156} These contacts were made more intimate when Josia Hutabarat started to organise Bible studies for the other indigenous Christians. He was well suited for the task since, because of his studies at Depok, he had previously interacted with other indigenous Christians and spoke Malay. By the Ambon and the Menado in Medan, he was obviously accepted, in that they were willing to accept him as their minister.

For the Ambon and the Menado, the suggested change was that they would start a congregation within their Church, in which they would manage their own affairs. For the Toba, the initiative implied that they would break ties with the RMG. It seems that Hutabarat had, until then, been a loyal co-worker with the missionaries. But in consequence of the difficult financial situation in far away Medan, he reconsidered his attitude. In relation to the Protestantsche Kerk, the Toba would now appeal directly to the central colonial authorities, not being dependent on the fluctuating support from the Dutch ministers and the European community. The government appeared to be more reliable than the RMG in financial matters. At the time, it was, after all, basically the loans provided by the government that enabled the RMG to continue its mission on Sumatra.

This common action taken across ethnic boundaries and directed against the European authorities suggests that it was at least partly inspired by the nationalist movement. Can such a proposition be substantiated, despite the fact that Tampubolon provides the only available account of these events? At the time, the nationalist movement was well under way on Java, and on the east coast Sarekat
Islam and Insulinde had in 1918 launched a nationalistic campaign. In Tapanuli, Manullang had in 1917, inspired by the nationalist movement, founded Hatopan Kristen Batak. These developments make it highly likely that inspiration by the growing nationalist ethos should be reckoned with, as regards the effort to found a multi-ethnic congregation among indigenous Christians in Medan in 1919.

Despite the support that the plan obtained, it was not acted upon. Even though a substantial part of the Toba congregation and Hutabarat supported the plan, the majority did not. They did not want to break with the RMG and feared that their minister would be expelled and that it would not be easy to build up a new congregation after all.¹⁵⁷

When the missionary Kessel, who temporarily acted as Ephorus after the death of Nommensen, heard about the sentiments in Medan and Hutabarat’s support for the plan to break with the RMG, he decided that the Toba minister should be transferred from Medan. In this situation, the congregation stood up for their minister, sent a delegation to meet with Kessel and managed to get him to change his mind. Hutabarat remained minister in Medan.¹⁵⁸

These events show that the congregation appreciated Hutabarat’s work, even though the majority did not endorse his plan to break with the RMG. According to Tampubolon, who shows a great deal of empathy with the situation of the minister, the Ephorus did not understand the situation of the Toba minister and the hard work that had to be undertaken in Medan.¹⁵⁹ The implication is that the Toba community thought it would be difficult to find an able replacement for Hutabarat. Because of the support of the congregation, it appears that Hutabarat did not persist in his plan and remained loyal to the RMG. It is possible that the support of the congregation also involved some kind of guarantee of assistance that enabled him, at least temporarily, to solve his financial problem.

Hutabarat could also count on support from Müller in Pematang Siantar. In his report of 1919, prepared before the Missionary Conference in June that year, for instance, he does not mention anything about Hutabarat’s willingness to break with the RMG. Instead, he praises him and says that "In Medan, the small congregation has been well kept by the unexceptionally faithful, long-standing work of Rev. Josia."¹⁶⁰ It is possible that the support influenced the acting Ephorus to

¹⁵⁷ Tampubolon 1937, p. 33.
¹⁵⁸ Tampubolon 1937, pp. 33f.
¹⁵⁹ Tampubolon 1937, pp. 33f.
¹⁶⁰ "In Medan hat sich bei der durchweg treuen, jahreangen Arbeit des pandia Josia die kleine Gemeinde gut gehalten und gefestigt." Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1919, BM 2.852. VEM. This paragraph was written after the local initiative in Medan, since Müller in his report mentions the move to the Gereformeerde congregation that occurred later. It is very unlikely that Müller was unaware of the plan in Medan to break with the RMG, a plan that the acting Ephorus was informed about.
allow the minister to remain in Medan. As the missionary responsible for Medan, Müller's opinion would have carried weight.

While it was possible to restore cordial relations between the Toba congregation, including Hutarabat personally, and the RMG, the implication for the connections with the other indigenous Christians was negative. Tampubolor says that "After that time, not many Christian Batak continued to join the service together with Ambon and Menado." The cause was probably that the Ambon and the Menado were disappointed that they were, in the end, not able to recruit the Toba minister and a majority of the Toba congregation for the initiative. These feelings were detrimental to their relation to the Toba community as a whole. The idea of a multi-ethnic congregation of indigenous Christians under the auspices of the colonial government remained a dream.

With regard to the financial problem of the Toba minister, the transfer to the Gereformeerde congregation meant that it was at least solved temporarily. But there is an indication that there was also a lack of interest or resources in this respect on the part of the Dutch congregation as a whole. In 1921, Zending Batak provided money for Hutabarat's salary and Harrenstein is said to have taken money from his own salary when contributions were not enough. It is possible that also the leadership of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Medan had problems in raising funds for work among the Toba during the war in Europe.

Despite the financial support channelled through the minister of the Dutch congregation, relations between the Toba congregation and the Gereformeerde Kerken appear not to have been very close. The Dutch congregation mainly provided a place in which to worship and funds for the minister. The implication is that Hutabarat could continue to work independently, without close supervision from any European clergy or missionary.

Building congregation and community

The Toba Batak explore the Christian flora of Medan. During the first few years of Toba migration to Medan and before the congregation affiliated to the RMG was set up, the pressure from Malay-Muslim society had the effect that the Toba decided to hide their religious identity. Despite the fact that there were difficulties in being practising Christians, some Toba attended worship with the existing congregations in Medan. The primary criterion for attending worship was naturally that the services were held in a language they understood.

161 Bat. "Olat ni ndang apala sadia saor be Christen Batak tu halak Ambon dohot Menado di parmingguon." Tampubolon 1937, p. 34.
A group of Toba who knew Dutch worshipped at the Protestantsche Kerk. The congregation in Medan had opened its main service to indigenous Christians in 1911.\(^{163}\) This may have been a response to the start of the Toba migration to the city. Toba migrants also attended the Methodist service held at a shop on Kapiteinsweg (the present Jalan Singamangaraja) in the southern part of the Chinese district. The service was led by a Chinese businessman and was held both in Chinese and in Malay.\(^{164}\)

The Methodist mission had at the time also started to cultivate relations with the Toba. One example of early contacts was in 1910, when Lamsana Lumbantobing and his family arrived in Singapore. He had studied at the RMG seminary at Sipoholon but had for unknown reasons come into conflict with the RMG and left the seminary. In Singapore, he came into contact with the Methodist bishop Oldham and eventually became a Methodist minister.\(^{165}\) The Rev. Lumbantobing was later sent to Sumatra to investigate the possibilities of conducting mission work, and he brought back five Toba who wanted to study at the Methodist seminary in Singapore.\(^{166}\) The other contact was with Raja Tuan Nagori of a Batak group living in the Asahan region. He wanted missionaries and schools for his people and had made contacts with the RMG. When they refused to send missionaries, the Asahan area being outside the comity area of the RMG, he wrote to Singapore, asking the Methodists to provide missionaries.\(^{167}\) The implication of these contacts is that the Methodist mission need not have been totally foreign to the Toba in Medan and that they actively tried to connect with that mission by joining worship with the Methodist congregation. About 1910, some Toba actually tried to become members of the Methodist congregation, but the Methodist missionary encouraged them to remain loyal to the RMG.\(^{168}\)

The Toba also attended the Catholic service in Medan.\(^{169}\) Presumably, they attended the service held in Dutch. The Catholic Church was not unknown to the Toba migrants either. On Java, there were Toba who at the turn of the century had established relations with that Church.\(^{170}\) When Capuchins had established

\(^{163}\) Tampubolon 1937, pp. xii, 20.
\(^{164}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 16.
\(^{165}\) Daulay 1995, pp. 178ff.
\(^{166}\) Daulay 1995, pp. 178ff.
\(^{167}\) Daulay 1995, pp. 221ff.
\(^{168}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 17.
\(^{169}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 20.
\(^{170}\) F. Wenneker, a Dutch Jesuit in Jakarta who had worked in Medan from 1878 to 1884, was helped by a certain Elias Pandiangan from Lumban Soit in Tapanuli. He had sent his children to a Catholic school in Jakarta and helped Wenneker to translate the Catholic catechism into Toba Batak. In 1912 Pandiangan left for Tarutung and on the way met with the Capuchins in Padang and urged them to start working in Tarutung. Nothing substantial came of this contact and Pandiangan did not convert to the Catholic Church. Aster 1959, p. 36.
themselves in the region in 1912, they were also frequently approached by the Toba, who wanted them to establish schools in Tapanuli. The Toba who established contacts with these denominations did not become members there and it is uncertain how regular they became as visitors to these congregations. According to Tampubolon, they generally thought that they were primarily members of the Church at home.

The initial phase of the Toba Batak congregation. The establishment of a Toba congregation in Medan affiliated to the RMG meant that the Toba could start to connect with the Church at home. Even though visiting other congregations gave them new experiences, the overwhelming majority preferred to worship with other Toba in a similar way to that they were used to. There are, for instance, no Methodist or Catholic records showing that Toba in Medan joined these denominations until the mid 1920s. On the other hand, some temporary migrants did not bother to register with the congregation in Medan. They thought that their membership in and their contributions to the congregation at home were enough. A contributory factor may have been that they were outside the social life of Tapanuli, in which going to church was in many areas an important element. It had the effect, that while they stayed in Medan, they were not practising Christians.

In describing the establishment of the congregation, Tampubolon exclaimed that: "the rope of union had been knit with the Church in the homeland. The soul had returned to the house." The soul (tondi) is in Toba culture regarded as a constituting force of the human being. The image meant that, before the teacher was stationed in Medan, the people were not really Toba proper or even human. They had lost their constituting principle. The establishment of the Toba congregation implied that the Toba were able to maintain relations with the Church and the community in Tapanuli. They had become Toba again.

In terms of organisation, at first the congregation was simply a group of people who gathered together with Hutabarat. As long as the number of Toba was rather small, it was not regarded as necessary to develop the organisation. But, when the number of members grew, it is likely that the congregation more or less formally selected some men to make decisions in co-operation with Hutabarat.

---

171 Aster 1959, pp. 37, 41f.
172 Tampubolon 1937, p. 17. Tampubolon refers only to the Toba who attended the Methodist service, but I think it is possible to generalise from his statement.
173 These developments in the 1920s will be a theme of the next chapter.
174 Theis, Eine erklärende Erläuterung zum statistischen Fragebogen für Medan, Medan January 1931. BM 1.978. VEM.
It was only in 1920 that the RMG decided that each congregation would have a church council (Kerkraad). As regarded Medan, Tampubolon first mentioned a church council in relation to events in 1926. But the introduction of the system was not highlighted in itself. The implication was that some sort of informal council existed before 1920 and that the change therefore was, at least by Tampubolon, not seen as particularly important.

In the process of building up the congregation, Hutabarat played the main role. As a teacher he was certainly important, but his ordination in 1914 meant that he obtained an independent position vis-à-vis the European ministers and missionaries, a position that he was able to maintain even after the conflict with the RMG and the move to the Gereformeerde congregation. Ordination also had the effect that Hutabarat's status increased within the Toba community.

Hutabarat was responsible not only for Medan but also for the rest of the east coast. He regularly led services in Medan and Arnemdia, one hour by train from Medan. In order to visit the people working at the plantations surrounding Medan, he borrowed a bicycle from the Protestantsche Kerk. It is uncertain to what extent he visited the Toba who lived in other parts of the east coast, but it is likely that he occasionally managed to visit those who lived on the plantations and in the small towns of the region. Besides leading regular worship, Hutabarat also took care of baptisms and funerals. Marriages were at the time not conducted in Medan.

Funerals represented a special problem and the relative isolation of the community was felt strongly when one of its members passed away. Even though most Toba in Medan were rather young, it often occurred that people died, from disease or during childbirth. Even though the child-mortality rate was probably lower in Medan than in Tapanuli, the death of a newborn baby was quite common. The women I interviewed who lived in Medan before 1942 had often lost one or two children.

The religious and ethnic position of the Toba in Medan, which implied that they, at least outwardly, had assimilated Malay-Muslim culture, was one reason why problems could arise. According to Müller, “difficulties became severe when, in the case of death, it happened that a Christian was about to be buried in Muslim soil. Only with difficulty could this be averted.”

177 Tampubolon 1937, p. 52.
178 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 24f.
179 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1912. BM 2.867. VEM.
180 „Wie gross doch waren die Schwierigkeiten, wenn bei einem Sterberfall ein Christ in Mohammedanischer Erde beordigt werden sollte. Nur mit Mühe war es zu erreichen.” Müller, Bericht Medan 1932. BM 2.852. VEM. In this report from 1932 Müller, about to leave his position in Medan, reflects on the earlier developments in the city.
This quotation should not be interpreted as implying that Muslims, driven by a missionary zeal, forcibly tried to bury the Christians in the Muslim graveyard. When a Toba died, it was instead the neighbours, who were used to regarding him or her as a Muslim, who did what they had to do in such a situation, i.e. plan the funeral. They must have been both astonished and upset when they discovered that their acquaintance had been a Christian.

With regard to funerals, there were also problems that had to do with the size of the community. At the funeral of the first Toba who died in Medan, for instance, only ten persons were present.\(^{181}\) In Toba society funerals are in general large events, often attended by hundreds of people, including relatives, friends and colleagues. To be able to conduct the proper adat ceremonies, it is necessary that representatives from the right clans, i.e. those with whom the deceased had special relations, are present. The most important are the hulabula and the boru. The presence of only ten persons at a funeral was regarded as a tragedy, because it was not certain that the right clan representatives had been there. The presence of Hutabarat in Medan and his work in building up the Toba congregation implied that it was much easier to get hold of as many close clan members as possible to administer the proper ceremonies.

The expenses were also difficult to meet, because of the absence of the social structure from Tapanuli, in which one could count on the help of relatives and friends. The generally high costs in Medan also made it expensive to hold funerals.\(^{182}\) In order to address this problem, the congregations in Medan and Arnhemia in 1914 took the initiative to found the organisation Sarikat Dosniroha (Mutual Agreement Society). It was the first Toba voluntary association in Medan and was founded to help members if someone in the family died. In 1918, under the name of Bataksche Vereeniging Dosniroha, the association was formally acknowledged as a legal person by the Dutch administration.

The important role of the Toba minister in the organisation was underlined by the fact that he was initially the chairman (President) of the first board and later a member of the board as a commissioner (commissaris).\(^{183}\) Hutabarat was the leader of the congregation and would anyway play an important role at funerals. From the account it is obvious that the voluntary association and the congregation were closely connected.

\(^{181}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 20.
\(^{182}\) In 1914, the costs were estimated to be fl. 50, Tampubolon 1937, p. 28. One may compare this with the monthly salary of a minister in Tapanuli which was up to fl. 25. Castles 1972, pp. 141f.
\(^{183}\) Tampublon 1937, pp. 29f.
Those who were eligible for membership were "... Christian Batak and other indigenous inhabitants who are Christians, men or women."\textsuperscript{184} The statutes were written in Malay with the obvious intention of attracting non-Toba Christians and building financial resources of the organisation.\textsuperscript{185} Presumably, the main group in question was the Christians from Ambon and Menado. Despite the efforts to recruit other indigenous Christians to the organisation, it is quite certain that membership remained limited to the Toba community, especially after relations with the Ambon and the Menado had been severed.

**The social role of the Toba Batak minister.** Apart from leading services and carrying out ministerial duties, Hutabarat played an important social role. It can be assumed that the Toba themselves did not sharply distinguish between his religious and his social functions.

In Medan, Hutabarat was instrumental in connecting the Toba with one other. For instance, even during the first year of his presence in Medan, his home in the Sei Kerah area was said to have "become a true centre for the Batak in Medan."\textsuperscript{186} Müller claimed that, when he visited Medan, even though he had not announced his arrival, he always in the evening encountered a majority of the Toba in Hutabarat’s home.\textsuperscript{187} There is no reference to Hutabarat’s wife in the sources, but it is likely that she played an important role in making contacts among Toba women.

It appears that Hutabarat was actively seeking to make contacts with the Toba in the city and tried to find those who had just arrived. One way to do this was to obtain information from others about where newcomers lived who had not made contact with the congregation. He would then pay them a visit and ask them to come to his house or attend services in the Dutch church. Another way would be to walk around Medan on foot, trying to find Toba about whom he had no previous information. There were probably subtle signs that made it possible for Hutabarat to distinguish who might be a Toba. The main clue was probably that they spoke Malay with a Toba Batak accent. There might also have been other signs that had to do with physical appearance, gesture, pattern of movement and clothing.

Apart from Hutabarat’s work, there were other ways of gaining contact with newcomers once the community had been formed. The collective memory of the

\textsuperscript{184} "... cuma orang Batak dan bumiputera yang lain yang beragama Christen, lakilaki atau perempuan."

\textsuperscript{185} Another reason was probably that the statutes had to be formulated in Malay, in order to be acceptable to the Dutch administration.

\textsuperscript{186} "... ein rechter Mittelpunkt für die Bataks in Medan geworden."

\textsuperscript{187} Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1912. BM 2.867. VEM. For a similar point, see Tampubolon 1937, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{188} Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1914. BM 2.867. VEM. See also Tampubolon 1937, p. 24.
Toba in Medan has it that, each time the train from Pematang Siantar stopped at the railway station in Medan, there would be a Toba there to look for newcomers. The presence of Hutabarat in Medan made it possible for Toba living isolated from each other to make friends with people from the same or related marga, to hold services together in Toba Batak and to speak their mother tongue afterwards.

When he visited the Toba who lived on the rest of the east coast, he would lead prayers and hold services, but also convey news about relatives or events in Medan and North Tapanuli. His travels along the east coast implied that he connected with the Toba community those who usually lived without much contact with other Toba.

Hutabarat also played an important role in upholding relations with the community in Tapanuli. Two articles that he wrote in *Immanuel*, the Church magazine, were mainly devoted to news about social events, mainly regarding people who had passed away, that were important to friends and relatives at home. One typical example was as follows:

In April this year Bonifacius Silitonga, Helper 1 in kampung Lalang near Medan, died. This Bonifacius was the child of Raja Philemon Silitonga of Sipahutar. Boni's disease was fever. He died in the Medan hospital. The following day, I and Paulus Lumbantobing from Porbubu (Helper 1 in the Depot in Medan) immediately asked a Chinese businessman to take care of the body. The payment was fl. 10. The deceased was put in a coffin in a black robe with a mourning border. That evening at five, he was buried. An opium official from Kampung Lalang arrived in Medan and came to the grave. Only the official, who knew the deceased, had the will to see him when he had died. The official was a Muslim. Furthermore, in the house of the officer, we packed the possessions of the deceased, until they came from Sipahutar to fetch them.

This time, the deceased did not have a family in Medan, and Hutabarat expected that his relatives in the village of Sipahutar would fetch the possessions. The Toba mentioned are identified in relation to their family and home village. The deceased and the one who helped Hutabarat were employees of Opiumregie. One should observe the exact titles of the individuals involved, which presuppose that the community in Tapanuli in many cases knew about the positions that Toba could occupy in the city. In the case of deaths, his report can be said to have

---

188 Tampubolon 1937, p. 24. I have frequently heard this statement from old Toba in Medan. Most of them had very likely not read Hutabarat's work.
served as a substitute for those who could not attend funerals in Medan. The story of the Muslim official, who was probably the immediate superior of the deceased, provided a modifying image of the generally negative perception of Islam. It was also intended to highlight the fact that in Medan a Muslim, instead of the close members of the deceased's marga, were present at the funeral.

Concluding remarks

The developments analysed in this chapter show that the Toba generally were able to retain their ethno-religious identity in the new context that Medan represented. But, for the first migrants, the only response to the outward cultural pressure was to adapt to it. Given their goal of gaining hasangapon by moving to the east coast, they were forced to adjust their behaviour and to appear like Malay Muslims. Not to assimilate was to expose oneself to abuse and discrimination.

This development was seen as a shift in terms of adat in the wider sense, from Toba adat to Malay adat. In this case, religio-ethnic identity was clearly a question of behaviour. The latter development shows, however, that the change of identity for most Toba was not permanent and that they were able to re-assert ethno-religious identity when given the opportunity.

The establishment of the Toba congregation, affiliated to the RMG and under the auspices of the two Dutch Protestant congregations, implied that the situation of the Toba in Medan had changed. The migrants were able to reconnect with the dominant religious organisation in Tapanuli with which they had been affiliated previously. Simultaneously, the congregation held out the possibility of upholding contacts with the whole social world in their area of origin. These contacts implied that the process of formulating ethno-religious identity in Medan, which is my concern here, also contributed to the process whereby Toba in Tapanuli became more and more aware of their own distinctiveness in relation to others.

The Toba community in Medan represented an odd and relatively distant part of the Toba cosmos. Even though the white-collar workers represented a new urban elite in Toba society and influenced social ideals in Tapanuli, relations with the home area were socially all-important. One example is that marriages were at the time not conducted in Medan.

In theological terms, the Toba chose to ally themselves with the tradition of the People's Church promulgated by the RMG missionaries and not with the in principle non-ethnic traditions of Methodism or Catholicism. Even though the tradition of the People's Church remained strong, Medan was obviously a place
where such a tradition could be challenged. The main example is the effort to found a separate and multi-ethnic congregation with other indigenous Christians. The initiative demonstrates that the Toba loyalty to the RMG should not be taken for granted. A time of financial crisis made them pragmatically consider where they could obtain sufficient resources.

In relation to the surrounding society, the establishment of the Toba congregation should be regarded as the first stage in Toba identity formation in Medan. Under the leadership of the Rev. Hutabarat, the congregation enabled the Toba to come together to "recapture" Toba church life, Toba Batak language and kinship ties, in short, ethno-religious identity. It was the only Toba organisation in the city at the time, if one excludes the Toba voluntary association with which it anyway had strong connections.

The pan-Batak revival, which has been discussed in Chapter 1 and in which the Toba participated, was a later development and with different dynamics. It was explicitly designed to show Medan that it was possible to be both Batak and civilised. The Toba joined the movement with the expectation that they would gain a better position by allying themselves with other Batak. The result was that in this context they stressed their general Batak identity and played down the fact that they were Christians. In this context, religion and Batak identity needed to be separated, but in order to gain strength, together with other Batak groups.
CHAPTER 4

The mission challenged: RMG urban strategy and Toba Batak opposition (1925-1930)

Introduction

In Chapter three I discussed the establishment of the Toba community in Medan and the role of the congregation affiliated to the RMG in articulating Toba Batak identity. In the 1920s, developments occurred that had an effect on the context in which Toba ethno-religious identity in Medan developed.

Within the nationalist movement, the failure of the Communist rebellion launched in 1925 had the effect that Sukarno's inclusive form of nationalism became dominant in the nationalist struggle. It also increased the zeal with which the government made efforts to control the movement. The activities of Hatopan Kristen Batak are an example in which nationalist propaganda found a fertile ground in growing Toba demands for more influence over the structure of the RMG. These demands implied that the RMG found itself in a new situation in which Toba loyalty could not be taken for granted. After many discussions, the RMG tried to appease the critical Toba by launching in 1930 an autonomous Church called Huria Kristen Batak Protestant. In Medan, an important change in the 1920s was that various ethnic groups obtained more freedom to express their identity and started to challenge the rights of Malays to assimilate the indigenous population.

In relation to these developments, the following analytical questions will be explored: What strategy was employed in the 1920s by RMG in Medan and what were its consequences? In what way were Toba demands for more influence vis-à-vis the RMG expressed in Medan? What impact can be observed from the nationalist movement and local ethnic dynamics?
Contradictory devolution

New RMG initiatives on the east coast of Sumatra

Ever since the RMG had got to know that the Toba were migrating to the east coast, the mission had tried to build bonds between them and the mission structure in Tapanuli. From the beginning of the RMG’s engagement in Medan, there were plans to station at least one missionary in Medan, but after 1914 the difficult financial situation of the mission prevented the implementation of these plans. Instead, the congregation, under the leadership of its minister, developed independently of missionary authority.

In the early 1920s, the RMG took new initiatives with regard to the Toba on the east coast. In 1921, one RMG missionary travelled along the east coast and in Aceh to meet the Toba who lived there and to report back to his missionary colleagues on his experiences. His general impression of the situation was positive. The Toba had not converted to Islam and wanted to uphold contacts with the Church in Tapanuli. The missionaries also discussed how to minister to them. But, for the time being, it was thought sufficient that Zending Batak, the Toba mission organisation, was active in these areas.

In 1922, the Ephorus, Warneck, made another effort. Accompanied by two other missionaries, he travelled extensively along the east coast. He thought that, if the Toba in this area were to remain Christian, it would be necessary to station more Toba ministers there. The mission would place a missionary in Medan to supervise the work. Another reason for stationing a missionary in the city was that Medan had replaced Padang on the west coast as the main transit port for RMG personnel working in Tapanuli and on the island of Nias off the west coast of Sumatra. The missionary would be able to take care of customs requirements and welcome newcomers. If this decision was implemented, Medan would become a mission station, which would also imply that a church needed to be built.

With regard to comity borders it was obviously not thought that a missionary in Medan would violate them. The same conclusion applies to the activities of

---

1 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz Sipoholon 17-23 June 1924. BM: 2.890. VEM.
2 Warneck to Deputation, Pearaja 12 November 1921. BM: 2.908. VEM.
3 Warneck to Deputation, Pearaja 3 August 1922. BM: 2.908. VEM.
4 Warneck, Zum Protocol der Nias-Konferenz 1926, 26 August 1926. BM: 2.908. VEM. The leadership in Barmen would most likely respond positively to the argument that a mission station in Medan made the coming and going of personnel more convenient.
5 Lotz, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1925. BM: 2.867. VEM.
Zending Batak, because the organisation was regarded as an indigenous missionary organisation. Even though the Methodist mission is not mentioned in these RMG documents, the plans to station Toba ministers on the east coast probably would be implemented in co-operation with them. In 1923, the two missions made an agreement to the effect that the Toba who left Tapanuli and migrated to the east coast would come under the auspices of the Methodist mission. The arrangement was made possible because only the Methodist mission had the right to carry on work in the area. In 1922, Warneck thought, however, that the general financial situation of the mission did not permit them to implement the plans.

These initiatives show that, despite the fact that its financial position had not stabilised, the RMG was willing to make new attempts to develop its engagement on the east coast. The aim was to strengthen the pastoral care of the migrants and connect them more clearly with the mission in Tapanuli.

The removal of Josia Hutabarat from Medan

According to Tampubolon, the conflicts that in the 1920s were to plague the Toba community in Medan began in 1925, when Hutabarat was removed from Medan. This started a process whereby the congregation was split up like “a tree cut to pieces” (singkam mabarbar). Until then, the congregation had “for 13 years worked together in the same direction together with the minister.” Tampubolon admitted that there “naturally had been those who had tried to break the unity before, but it had so far been possible to restore good relations.” It is likely that he was referring to the developments in which a group in the congregation wanted to form a separate congregation, together with people from Ambon and Minahassa. This first part of paragraph 32 in Tampubolon’s history, which is the last one dealing with “what happened during the time of Josia Hutabarat”, thus provides a positive but balanced evaluation of the period as a whole. The coming events were obviously not regarded in such a positive fashion.

In 1925, the RMG notified the congregation in Medan that its clergy would be transferred from Medan to Pematang Siantar. The message reached the congre-
gation in July 1925. It is said to have come from Pematang Siantar. It is likely that it was the Ephorus, Warneck, who originally made the decision. He had two years earlier commented that Hutabarat would soon have to be replaced because “he was not equal to his task.” In 1925, Warneck must have thought that the time had come to remove him from Medan. The congregation was obviously notified via Lotz, the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar with authority over Medan.

It is somewhat difficult to interpret Warneck’s statement about Hutabarat’s abilities as a minister. It seems strange that Warneck in 1923 thought that Hutabarat, who at the time had been working in Medan for more than a decade, was not capable of doing his work properly. The statement may indicate that Hutabarat had problems in remaining the leader of the congregation in the fashion that Warneck wanted him to be. Certainly, there were, by the mid-1920s, many Toba men in Medan who had acquired a more advanced education and more profitable employment than the clergyman. This could have lead to a situation in which Hutabarat was not as respected as he had been and in which there were others who de facto ruled the congregation. Another argument might have been Hutabarat’s age. He was at the time in his late 50s and it is possible that Warneck thought that he had become too old to take care of the demanding work.

According to Tampubolon, the message that Hutabarat had to leave Medan “was not supposed to be responded to.” However, the congregation did not readily accept the decision to remove their minister. Instead, they petitioned Warneck to allow Hutabarat to continue working in Medan until he retired. Even if Tampubolon in this case did not differentiate between the church council and the congregation, it is likely that the request was formulated by the council and that a majority of the congregation supported it. The congregation also claimed

---

11 In August 1925, some dissatisfied Toba, as a direct consequence of this letter, decided to leave the congregation. This development will be discussed later in this chapter. Since the issue of the removal of Hutabarat was probably discussed at the Missionary Conference in June 1925, it is likely that the message arrived in Medan in July 1925.
12 Tampubolon 1937, p. 49.
13 “... der Arbeit nicht gewachsen ist.” Warneck, Ephoralbericht 1922/1923. BM: 2908. VEM.
14 I have not found sources on this matter in the RMG archives. The decision could have been made after informal discussions at the Annual Conference of the missionaries in 1925. The main reason why Tampubolon did not mention who had made the decision was that he did not dare to put the blame explicitly on any individual missionary. If Warneck had made the decision, Tampubolon had good reasons not to be too outspoken. In 1937, when Tampubolon wrote his book, Warneck had become the Director of the RMG in Germany and had thus become even more powerful than before.
15 Bat. “... surat boaboa ... na so boi alusan be.” Tampubolon 1937, p. 49.
16 Tampubolon 1937, p. 49.
that it was the right of congregations to choose a minister themselves. The idea was clearly in line with the general demands for more Toba influence within the structure of the mission put forward by, for instance, Hatopan Kristen Batak. The organisation had also a group of supporters in the city.

It is clear that a substantial part of the congregation did not share Warneck's opinion of the abilities of their minister and instead supported him, going to some lengths in opposition to Warneck's decision. Even though it is possible that Hutabarat's age meant that he could not work as hard as he had done in the past, his age was not to his disadvantage in his relations with the congregation. Because of the general respect for age and experience in Toba culture, Hutabarat had, as a senior clergyman, acquired more respect than before. It can confidently be assumed that he remained a respected minister and community leader.

The fact that Hutabarat's position remained solid points to a more likely reason than lack of authority or old age why Warneck thought that he had to remove the minister from Medan.

Because the Toba community in the mid-1920s had developed a strong sense of identity and self-esteem, it would be natural for missionaries to think that the congregation in Medan under Hutabarat's leadership had become too independent, compared with the rural congregations in Tapanuli. It also confirmed the generally negative attitude of the missionaries to educated migrants. The RMG thought that, in order to connect the congregation more clearly with missionary authority, the independent-minded minister and community leader had to be removed. The strong protest of the congregation and their assertion that they had the right to choose their leader only strengthened missionary convictions that they had made the correct decision.

There is another indication that the RMG tried to assert its authority in Medan more clearly. The congregation had in 1924 set up a fund to collect money to build a church. When Hutabarat had been removed from Medan, his position as honorary chairman (Eere Voorzitter) of the fund was not given to the new Toba

---

17 This conclusion is based on the way in which missionaries treated developments in Medan at their Annual Conference the following year. At first they noted the conversions in Medan to the Catholic Church, a development that occurred as a direct response to the decision to remove Hutabarat from Medan and will be discussed later in this chapter. Then the Conference stated: "In regard to this situation the Conference says that the time has not yet come for congregations to choose their own minister." ("Bei dieser Gelegenheit äussert sich die Konferenz dahin dass er noch nicht an der Zeit ist, die Gemeinden ihre Pandita selbst wählen zu lassen." ) Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1-7 July 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM. The reason for such a statement must have been that a proposal like that had come from the congregation in Medan.

18 On a list of contributors and subscribers in Soara Batak, 28 March 1925, 11 persons living in Medan are listed.
minister but instead to J. Hemmers, the Dutch supporter of the RMG who was active in the Gereformeerde congregation in Medan. The new minister became vice-chairman.\textsuperscript{19} Even though the position as honorary chairman was formally an executive one, it can be expected that the RMG assumed that Hemmers, by virtue of being European and a strong supporter of the RMG, would be able to influence developments according to the wishes of the mission.

With regard to the nature of Toba resentment, it is safe to conclude that the Toba in Medan did not see any convincing reason why their minister should be forced to leave the city. After all, he had been working there for 13 years and had become an experienced senior pastor and respected leader in the community. Because the decision was taken without consultation with them, the congregation felt that their relative independence within the mission structure was threatened, an independence that had been theirs since the congregation was founded.

In more cultural terms, I think that the Toba reaction should be interpreted as a way of showing that they had not been treated with proper respect. In the Toba culture, the quality of being respected, \textit{hasangapon}, is something that some people have more of than others, but, on the other hand, owing to the egalitarian features of Toba culture, \textit{hasangapon} is something mutual. Most Toba in Medan certainly recognised that the RMG missionaries had \textit{hasangapon} that was superior to theirs. On the other hand, they thought that, by virtue of their employment in Medan, they had acquired more \textit{hasangapon} than before and should at least be consulted before important decisions were made regarding the congregation.

Hutabarat himself did not make any open complaint. The lack of discussion of the issue in the available sources makes it clear that no one really expected him to do so. The Toba clergy were selected for ordination on the basis of their long-lasting loyalty to the missionaries.\textsuperscript{20} When they were ordained, they finally obtained a decent salary and a prominent position in Toba society. Even the most independent-minded minister would therefore not oppose the missionaries. This would mean that they ran the risk of being expelled from the ministry. Hutabarat’s long service and relatively advanced age made it even more likely that he did not want to jeopardise his position.

Despite the opposition of the congregation, the RMG did not change its decision and Hutabarat was sent to Pematang Siantar. With regard to this development, Tampubolon lamented that their request was not formulated sufficiently sharply.\textsuperscript{21} The statement implied that the decision might have been revoked, had the congregation formulated their request in harsher terms. The phrase that the

\textsuperscript{19} For the composition of the boards of the church fund, see Tampubolon 1937, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{20} Castles 1972, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{21} Tampubolon 1937, p. 49.
letter of transfer was “not supposed to be responded to” and the realisation that the congregation had tried in vain to change the decision was a criticism of the mission for being paternalistic and authoritarian. On the other hand, the view that the decision might have been changed, thereby putting some blame on the congregation, could have served the purpose of softening the critique.

After their petition had been rejected, the Toba congregation did not continue their protests in any formal way. It does not appear that they tried at this stage to present their “case” to a wider audience. The Toba press, such as Hatopan Kristen Batak’s paper Soara Batak, had an independent and critical attitude to the RMG missionaries and drew inspiration from the emerging, Indonesian, nationalist movement. Had the Toba in Medan interpreted the conflict in nationalistic terms or thought that the issue was relevant to the whole Toba community, they would certainly have reported the events in Medan to the Toba press. They would certainly not have hesitated to write about these events, had they come to know about them.

Even if some Toba had interpreted the removal of Hutabarati in political terms, the tense political situation of 1925, when the Communist uprising was being crushed by the colonial government, would have made them hesitant to voice their opposition openly. The congregation did not consider that further protests were of any use, and the majority felt that it was not really appropriate for the Toba to openly oppose the missionaries. For the time being, the events in Medan were not thought to concern the rest of the Toba community and they remained a local issue.

After he had been removed from Medan, Hutabarati continued to work as a minister in the area around Pematang Siantar and after retirement he was supported financially by the Batak Mission to lead the congregation in Tebing Tinggi on the east coast. He died in 1932.

The replacement for Hutabarati in Medan was the newly ordained Rev. Willy Sinaga, who in early November 1925 was brought to Medan by Lotz and installed as the new minister. It is likely that the RMG thought that a young inexperienced minister would be easier to handle than his senior and well-established predecessor. It was certainly not easy for Sinaga to replace a senior minister who had been forcibly removed from his post. However, he is said to have worked diligently and managed to gain the confidence of the congregation. He also appears to have had a more stable financial position than his predecessor, because his salary was paid directly by the RMG.26

22 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz RMG 9-15 June 1931, p. 4. BM: 2.890. VEM.
23 Tampubolon 1937, p. viii.
24 Tampubolon 1937, p. 50.
25 Tampubolon 1937, p. 50.
26 In 1928, his salary was fl. 100 per month. Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 5-11 June 1928. BM 2.890. VEM.
Conversions in protest

Despite the fact that open protests aimed at changing the decision of the mission did not continue, a small, discontented group, who, according to Tampubolon, could not "... change their thinking in a positive way ...", decided to leave the congregation. They first approached the Methodist mission in Medan and tried to become members of the Methodist congregation.

Contacts between the Toba and the Methodist mission were not new. Before the congregation affiliated with the RMG was set up in Medan, some Toba used to visit the Methodist service and a number of them studied at Methodist schools in Medan. About 1910, some Toba had tried to become members of the Methodist congregation, but the Methodist missionary encouraged them to remain loyal to the RMG. The Methodist mission was then a natural "first choice" of the Toba who wanted to leave the RMG.

In general, the Methodist mission and the RMG co-operated on the basis that they respected one another as valid Protestant organisations. The RMG was an interdenominational missionary society and the Methodists stressed that they were only one part of the total Christian movement. The agreement between the two missions that the Toba on the east coast would come under the auspices of the Methodist mission implied that they still remained members of the home congregation in Tapanuli. Until the late 1940s, no Methodist congregations were therefore set up in Tapanuli. The RMG and Methodist identities were in this case complementary and determined by geographical factors. Medan was, however, exempted from this agreement. The city was outside the general agreements that regulated mission work and the two missions had equal status.

When Warneck, presumably through other Toba in Medan, heard about those who had contacted the Methodist mission, he approached his colleague Archer, the American Methodist missionary in Medan. Together, they decided that no Toba would be accepted into the Methodist congregation. Warneck obviously wanted the Toba in Medan to remain under the umbrella of the RMG. The Methodists, on the one hand, were engaged in building up their work among the Toba on the east coast and it might have been tempting for them to recruit Toba also in Medan. The Methodist missionary in Medan, on the other hand, would not be willing to compromise the good relations with the RMG. It is also possible that he...

---

27 Bst. "... masitungkaran pingkiran laho padengganhon ...”. Tampubolon 1937, p. 50.
28 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz RMG 1-7 June 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM.
29 Tampubolon 1937, p. 17.
30 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz RMG 1-7 June 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM.
doubted that the motives of the Toba for leaving the RMG congregation were “pure” enough.

The group who had left the congregation but had been prevented from becoming Methodists now faced a rather difficult situation. They could return to the old congregation, a move that would be embarrassing. The Toba minister or a missionary would then probably demand that, before being accepted again, they should publicly “confess their sins”. They did not opt for this humiliating alternative. Instead, they decided to approached the Catholic Church and seek membership with them.31

While communication between the RMG and the Methodist mission was respectful, the relation between the RMG and the Catholic Church was antagonistic. In general, the RMG, with its background in German Protestantism, had a very negative attitude to the Catholic Church.32 The attitude of the Catholic Church to the Protestant Churches was at the time based on the decisions of the first Vatican Council. The Council stressed the authority of the Pope and said that Protestants were “heretics”, i.e. they had departed from the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and were “schismatic”, because they had abandoned the Church led by the Pope in Rome.

Local conditions on Sumatra did not make relations any better. In North Sumatra, the RMG perceived Catholicism as its main rival, particularly because the Catholic Church had started working to gain access to “RMG territory”. In their efforts to keep their “flock” away from the Catholic Church, the RMG missionaries produced pamphlets and preached against that Church.33 They taught that Catholics were the spiritual enemies of “true” Christianity, which, in turn, was championed by the RMG.34 The antagonism to the Catholic Church also influenced the Toba clergy.35 Tampubolon’s work echoes this anti-Catholic rhetoric. In a context which deals with the other “religions” (ugama), i.e. the Christian denominations that the Toba in Medan had joined, the faith of the Catholic Church is said to be “another faith” (haporsean na asing).36 The fact that the Toba who

31 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz RMG 1-7 June 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM.
34 This is the underlying assumption of many anti-Catholic statements that can be found in RMG sources. Sometimes this anti-Catholic agitation led the colonial authorities to consider it a potential threat to public order. In 1937, after a church meeting in Pematang Siantar, the Assistant Resident for Simalungun- and Karo-landen sent a letter of warning to the missionary who during the meeting agitated strongly against Catholicism. Mailr. no. 436 geh/ 37, p. 5. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra. ARA.
35 See the section entitled “Taringotu Roomsch Katoliek” in Rev. I. Tambunan, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1934. BM: 2.946. VEM.
36 Tampubolon 1937, p. 68.
joined the Catholic Church had first approached the Methodists indicates that the
antagonistic relations between the RMG and the Catholic Church also influenced
the ordinary Toba in Medan and made that Church their second choice.

In their turn, the Catholics regarded it as unfair that North Tapanuli should
remain the exclusive domain of a Protestant mission. In order to break this mo-
nopoly, Catholic organisations in the Netherlands lobbied in the Dutch Parliament
for their cause. These efforts were crowned with success in the early 1930s.37

Before the mid-1920s, there were only a few Toba contacts with the Catholic
Church. On Java, some Toba had at the turn of the century established contacts
with the Jesuits.38 When the Capuchins established themselves in Padang in 1912,
they were also frequently approached by Toba who wanted them to establish
schools in Tapanuli.39 The Catholic Church was, in other words, approached mainly
with expectations of worldly progress. In the words of a Dutch priest: “All pri-
vate letters came to us from various small marga and apart from one the motive of
the letters was worldly progress.”40 This is a well-known pragmatism and a typical
missionary comment.

After the Catholic Church in the 1930s obtained permission to work in Tapanuli,
it gained most converts in areas such as the island of Samosir, where RMG schools
were not numerous or well established.41 One of the first Catholic missionaries in
the region also reported that it was impossible to convert the people without
providing them with westernised schools. One of the first questions that the
Toba asked would be: “Will we have a school from you? Will you build schools
like the ones in Medan?”42

In Medan, two Toba children, whose parents came from Silindung and had a
Protestant background, were baptised as early as 1896.43 Catholic sources do not
provide more information and these conversions seem to have been an isolated

37 Aster 1959, pp. 41ff.
38 Aster 1959, p. 36.
39 See Chapter 3, section “The Toba Batak explore the Christian flora of Medan”.
40 “Alle particulere brieven aan ons kwamen uit dezelfde klein marga en op één na was de strekking
van al die brieven verbetering in het tijdelijke.” P. Marinus quoted in Aster 1959, p. 41.
41 The centrality of Samosir and Lake Toba to the Toba Catholics is often shown in North Sumatra.
It is typical that Aster’s first chapter in his history of the Catholic mission, Aster 1959, is called
“The holy lake in the highlands” (“Het heilige meer op de hoogvlakte”).
43 Kronieken Sumatra Missie n.d., p. 5. ACH.
incident. It is not very likely that they remained Catholics. Individual Toba had visited the Catholic church before the Toba congregation had been established and they had sent their children to Catholic schools. Before the removal of the Rev. Hutabarat from Medan no Toba had, however, become a member of the Church.

In August 1925, two Toba men approached a Dutch Catholic priest in Medan and said that they wanted to convert to the Catholic Church. Soon others followed suit and a priest started catechumen classes for them. With the exception of the children who were baptised in 1896, it is possible that this group represented the first Toba to join the Catholic Church. These Toba were obviously among those who decided to leave the Toba congregation when Hutabarat was replaced. On 3 April 1926, eight men converted officially to Catholicism. In September 1926, 16 families had converted. Maybe the Catholic Church thought that the men had been more active in the process than their wives and that the rest of their families would join them later. These first conversions were steadily followed by others. In 1932, the RMG missionary Müller claimed that 40-60 families had joined the Catholic Church because they were not satisfied with the situation in the HKBP congregation. These conversions were highly controversial in the Toba community and the group who remained loyal to the RMG threatened to expel Catholics from their voluntary association. As a response, the Catholics set up their own.

Dutch Catholic priests in Medan were certainly delighted with these sudden developments and thought that the first converts would become the spearhead that would open the way for them to enter Tapanuli. Catholic Toba in Medan also took the initiative and petitioned the Governor-General to allow Catholic missionaries to establish schools in Tapanuli.

Because the newly converted Catholics and also many Protestants preferred to send their children to Catholic schools, the Catholics started classes exclusively for Toba children. A course in Dutch was given, in itself a clear demonstration.
that one prime goal of the Toba was to learn Dutch. In 1927, the school was converted into a boarding school with HIS status. Because the Toba propandised for this school in Tapanuli, many pupils were soon sent there. In 1927, the school had 300 Toba pupils.\textsuperscript{52} The desire for education was also the reason given by the RMG missionaries as an explanation to the “fall” of the Toba who left the congregation affiliated with the RMG.\textsuperscript{53}

The school was also attractive to teachers employed by the RMG. In 1928, only 1 ¼ years after the school was opened, 50 teachers sought employment in the school. Their prime motive was that they thought the Catholic school could give them a better salary than the meagre one they received from the RMG.\textsuperscript{54} Compared with the RMG, that was still suffering financially from the First World War, the general opinion among the Toba was that the Catholic Church was very rich. There were, for instance, rumours that the Church had a square kilometre paved with pure gold in Rome.\textsuperscript{55} One would therefore expect that the Toba would readily join this Church if they thought that they could share in this fortune. The Dutch priest in charge of the school at the time said that he did not agree to receive these teachers unless they did away with all such expectations.\textsuperscript{56}

To claim that the Toba became Catholics only to secure a good education for their children is, however, too simplistic an argument. Even though it was mandatory for pupils in Catholic schools to join in Catholic prayers, there was no formal requirement that they should become Catholics.\textsuperscript{57} An old Catholic woman in Medan did not recall that in the 1920s there was any strong pressure to join the Catholic Church and stressed that she did so voluntarily after a couple of years, even before her parents had become Catholics.\textsuperscript{58} It is therefore reasonable to say that the conflict caused by the removal of the minister from the congregation affiliated with the RMG implied that those who already had links with the Methodist mission or the Catholic Church got a new incentive to join these denominations.

With regard to later developments, when the Toba founded their own independent congregations in Medan, I should point out that, in the example that has been discussed in this section, they did not abandon the RMG congregation because they wanted to escape the control of western missionaries. They knew that the Catholic Church and the Methodist Church were also run by westerners. The

\textsuperscript{52} Aster 1959, pp. 61f.
\textsuperscript{53} Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1927, p. 5. BM: 2.890. VEM.
\textsuperscript{54} Aster 1959, pp. 61f.
\textsuperscript{55} Aster 1959, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{56} Aster 1959, pp. 61f.
\textsuperscript{57} An old Protestant man told me that he had learned the Ave Maria prayer in the Catholic school and was still using this prayer at home.
\textsuperscript{58} Interview, nyonya Hutabarat boru Pasaribu (b. 1912).
issue at stake was instead which denomination had most legitimacy in Toba eyes. In this case, legitimacy was not a question of an acceptable theology but rather which denomination had the best leaders, who in the long run could provide most material benefits, including schooling. Loyalty to the RMG missionaries had been broken and with it the conviction that it was they who would provide most benefits.

It is, however, important to note that the group that left the congregation affiliated to the RMG was rather small. Later developments will show that, even though the majority of the congregation remained loyal to the RMG, resentment caused by the removal of their minister prevailed and would fuel later conflicts. The decision of a group to join other denominations in Medan also shows that affiliation to the RMG was not self-evident any longer, as it more or less had been in the past. It was now clear that it had become a matter of choice and that loyalty to RMG had become conditional.

The project of building a Church in Medan

Toba Batak expectations of manjae

The Toba congregation in Medan had for a long time been preparing to erect a church. A first endeavour to collect money for this project was made in 1913. For unknown reasons, the effort did not lead to concrete results. These plans were in 1924 again taken into consideration and in April 1925, a fund to collect money for a church (kerkbouwfonds) was formally constituted. Hutabarat became its honorary chairman and it was decided that every member should give 25% of his monthly salary to the fund. Though it is not known how many members actually paid 25% of their income the decision indicates strong commitment to the project.

There were practical problems that made the Toba feel that they needed a church of their own. The Dutch Gereformeerde church, where the Toba had worshipped since 1919, was now too small to accommodate the congregation for the regular Sunday service. The Toba community had grown fast in the 1920s and outnumbered the Gereformeerde congregation. The activities of the Toba congregation also demanded more time than before. They therefore needed a place where they could worship and hold other activities without having to adjust themselves to the demands of the Dutch congregation.

60 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 46f.
61 Tampubolon 1937, p. 25.
But there was more to the issue than practical considerations. The church that was eventually built was not much larger than the Gereformeerde church, even though they could fit more people into it.\textsuperscript{62} The strivings of the Toba congregation to assert their independence from the Gereformeerde Kerken also played an important part.

Co-operation between the Toba community and the Gereformeerde Kerken was quite superficial and formal. Even though the Dutch congregation had opened their church to the Toba and paid the salary of the minister, co-operation between the Dutch and the Toba clergy was never close. The Toba and the Dutch worshipped at different times in the church and did not have much contact, if any, with one another. The use of the Dutch church implied that the Toba had to break the tradition of morning services from Tapanuli and hold services in the afternoon, after the Dutch congregation had worshipped.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, in the mid-1920s, when the Toba perceived that they had become strong enough, they wanted to build their own church.

In order to understand how the Toba interpreted this process, it is useful to refer to the concept of \textit{manjae}. In Toba culture \textit{manjae} refers to the right of a married son to leave his parents to establish his own household. The newly married couple usually lived in the man's father's house for some time but would move no later than the birth of the first child. Whilst living with the man's father, the couple was not yet considered an independent family. The husband was not a full-fledged member of society and the wife helped her mother-in-law in running the home. The couple also did not have any financial responsibilities. After a while, they would decide to establish their own household, whereby they became an independent family with the normal responsibilities of adult life. The man would ask his father for his own property and, after a ceremonial meal and benedictions by his parents, the couple were ready to \textit{manjae}. They now managed their own affairs, cooked for themselves and were responsible for their own finances.\textsuperscript{64}

By analogy, the concept of \textit{manjae} is frequently used when a group decides to leave a Christian congregation to found a new one.\textsuperscript{65} In relation to the situation in Medan, it is interesting to note that the concept could be used to describe relations with Europeans. One example is from 1948, when the Toba had taken over leadership in the Church from the RMG and Dutch forces had returned to Indonesia in an effort to re-occupy the whole region. On one occasion in that year,

\textsuperscript{62} Personal observation.

\textsuperscript{63} According to Tampubolon, they worshipped at 4 p.m. in the Gereformeerde church. Tampubolon 1937, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{64} Vergouwen 1964, pp. 217ff.

\textsuperscript{65} This, for instance, is often the case in parish histories from the post-war period.
Justin Sihombing, the former minister in Medan and at the time Ephorus of the autonomous Church, argued strongly against the authority of foreign missionaries in the Church. The argument was that the Church now had manjae, i.e. had come into its own.\footnote{Nyhus 1987, pp. 181f.}

But it must be noted that the plan to build a church in Medan was not interpreted as manjae in the sources that I have had access to. The example mentioned above, where the term is explicitly used to denote the process whereby the Toba took over the leadership of the Church from European missionaries, is from a later period, when nationalist sentiments among the Toba influenced the use of the term.

It is anyway reasonable to assume that the cultural pattern of manjae influenced the interpretation of the situation also in Medan in the 1920s. The Toba had for long been dependent on the benevolence of Dutch congregations in Medan, with regard to finances, premises and personal support. They were certainly grateful for the help they had received. However, in the long run, dependence on others was thought not to be proper but humiliating, paralleling the strivings of a young couple to manjae, in order not to remain dependent on parents.

In the 1920s, the Toba in Medan had grown to become a sizeable community, living under more stable conditions, as well as earning larger and more regular incomes than during the first phase of migration. They then thought that it was time to change their relations with the Dutch Christians in the city. The Toba were prepared to manjae. They were now “adults” and not “children” of the Dutch congregation any longer. They wanted to acknowledge the good things that the members of the Dutch congregations had done for them, but to break their dependence and manage their own affairs, becoming “masters in their own house”.

This motive is connected with the fact that the Church was built up as an ethnic Church. The basic reason for their wanting to build a church was the simple fact that they were Toba. In general, the Toba are known to prefer to build their own churches when they migrate outside Tapanuli. This is the case even if there are other large Christian groups in the area or if the majority of the population are Christians.\footnote{In most places, the Toba at first co-operated with other European or Indonesian Christians, but, as soon as they could, they built their own church. Sometimes this kind of “separatism” has led to friction in areas such as North Sulawesi, where the majority are Christian.} Thus churches became, not only symbols of their dedication to their Church, but also a way in which they could manifest ethnic identity.

Tampubolon provided an additional reason why the Toba wanted to manjae when he wrote:
Oh, how sharp were not the eyes of the Muslims and their mockery in the beginning when they saw Batak enter the house of prayer of the white people: ‘Batak have become Christians, they have sold out their people’...

The quotation illustrates how the Toba were challenged by Muslims who thought that Christianity was the religion of Europeans and indigenous people sold themselves out if they converted to the “white man’s religion”. This line of thought does not necessarily have nationalist implications, even though a common theme among Muslim nationalists was that indigenous Christians had betrayed their people and were puppets of the Dutch.

Because the quoted passage in Tampubolon’s history occurs in the paragraph just before the one dealing with the formation of the first church fund, it should be interpreted as a motive for building a church of their own. The motive would then be, that when the Toba had manjae, it would be easier for them to counter accusations that they were imitators of Europeans. It is true that the Toba willingly associated themselves with Europeans if they could gain something from doing so. On the other hand, the connection between the Church and ethnic identity implied that they thought that they embraced Christianity as Toba and not as Europeans, a fact that a church in Medan would competently demonstrate.

As regards the attitude of the RMG, many missionaries in North Sumatra opposed the idea. They thought that the congregation in Medan should first be able to support a minister financially before planning to erect a church. For the time being, they should remain under the auspices of the Gereformeerde Kerken. The implication was that a missionary should not be stationed there, because a mission station in the RMG view demanded the building of a church.

The conversions of Toba to the Catholic Church in 1925 seem, however, to have changed these attitudes. The proposal for a missionary in Medan was no longer only a plan to be realised sometime in the future but should instead be implemented as soon as possible. Warneck agreed that the city was expensive but still thought that it was necessary to station a missionary there. The presence of a missionary was now thought to be necessary in order to restore order and prevent more people from leaving the congregation.

69 Lotz, Konferenzbericht Pematang Siantar 1924. BM: 2.867. VEM. In this report, Lotz refers to the opinions of other missionaries, while he himself supported the idea.
70 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1-7 June 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM.
71 Warneck to Wegner, Pearaja 10 March 1926. BM: 2.908. VEM.
It is evident that the Toba congregation and the missionaries both wanted to develop the congregation in Medan, including the building of a church. On the other hand, they had different motivations as to why they were to be engaged and different visions about the future. For the missionaries the priority was to transform Medan into a mission station in order to implement their new strategy. A mission station demanded a church building and the missionaries thought that a church would serve both them and the Toba best. For the Toba to build a church meant that they could become masters in their own house. The idea of developing Medan into a mission station was secondary and a substantial group in the congregation came to oppose the idea when the RMG actually introduced and implemented it.

Internal conflict and negotiations with the Municipal Council

In 1926, the RMG and the Toba in Medan together started the process whereby a church was to be built in Medan. On 25 February, Warneck led a meeting with the church council and the board of the church fund in Medan, to discuss the way in which to proceed with the plans. It was decided that Warneck would contact the congregations in Tapanuli in order to persuade them to contribute to the project. Furthermore, he would approach the Municipal Council in Medan and ask them to provide suitable land for a church building. According to Tampubolon, “the meeting gave the Ephorus authority to oversee the project from beginning to end ...”72

Tampubolon’s phrase should be regarded as an answer to the groups who later came to oppose missionary involvement in Medan. Tampubolon evidently sided with the decision of the church council, but he also stressed that it voluntarily gave the authority to Warneck. In a way, the phrase therefore indicated that authority originally belonged to the congregation and could be assigned to missionaries only to the extent that the council had delegated its authority to them. The authority of the council had in other words not been violated.

As regarded the congregation, Warneck’s presence was useful because they wanted his approval of the plans and to be able to use his authority to raise funds. In the countryside, the Toba generally built their own churches, in many cases rudimentary wooden buildings. The situation in Medan was different, because of the high costs in general. One can also assume that both the Toba and the missionaries agreed that the building of a church in Medan was a prestigious project.

A simple wooden church would not do. Furthermore, the congregation needed to approach the local administration in order to obtain the necessary permits. These contacts were much easier for Warneck to manage, by virtue of his being a European of high status.

Warneck himself probably thought that the congregation in Medan could not manage the project by themselves. It was necessary to engage the rest of the Toba community. His participation can also be interpreted as part of the efforts of the RMG to establish firm control over the congregation, a process that had begun when Hutabarat was removed from Medan. The missionaries might have feared that if the project was not successfully completed, they would run the risk of more members leaving the congregation.

After the agreement between Warneck and the church council, the Ephorus did not act immediately with regard to his new responsibility. It is obvious that he first wanted to discuss the matter with other missionaries at the Annual Conference in June. With the approval of the Conference, it would be easier to continue the project.

At the Annual Conference in 1926, the project of building a church in Medan was supported. But, on the other hand, it was decided that the project should not burden any of the central funds of the mission. Instead, the Conference decided to launch a collection in Tapanuli to obtain funds. The Tapanuli input was to be sponsored by Warneck and continue until the end of the year. The RMG was, in other words, not willing to use any of its central resources for a church in Medan but would use the authority of Warneck to urge the Toba to contribute.

When Warneck had convinced the Annual Conference that the plan to build a church was feasible and justifiable in financial terms, he contacted the Dutch administration in Medan. On 23 July, he wrote to the Municipal Council (Gemeenteraad) of Medan and applied for a piece of land for a church for the Christian Batak. On 22 September, the Council decided unanimously to provide free of costs a piece of land (35 X 40 m) for a church. The conditions laid down were that a satisfactory solution should be reached as to the responsible legal person and the piece of land that was to be used.

Regarding the question of a responsible legal person, the Municipal Council contacted the higher authorities in Jakarta that recognised the RMG congregation in Medan as a legal person, in a similar fashion to the congregations in Tapanuli. It was obviously customary to regard the congregations in the RMG comity area as legal persons, but because the congregation in Medan was the first outside that

---

73 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1-7 June 1926. BM: 2.890. VEM.
74 Gemeenteblad Medan 1, notulen 22 September 1926.
75 Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
area to plan its own church, its legal status was unclear. Before the congregation
planned to build a church, they were in a legal sense only a group of Toba who
met regularly in the Gereformeerde church. But the decision made by the colonial
authorities implied that the congregation could act as a legal person. 76 There is no
indication that the RMG did not accept the solution that the church in Medan
should be built in the name of the Toba congregation, as was the case in Tapanuli.

A second issue was that of the location of the ground to be given to the
congregation. The local administration presented two alternative sites. The first
was on Hugo de Vrieslaan (now Jalan Uskup Agung) in Polonia in the European
area, the second on Verleengde Balistraat (now Jalan Malaka) in the eastern parts
of the city. 77

Four days after the decision of the Municipal Council, the church council held
a meeting to decide on which piece of land to adopt. The new RMG missionary
in Pematang Siantar, Schneider, was also present. The council decided, by 11
votes to 4, to choose the site in Polonia. The next day, Schneider conveyed the
decision to the Municipal Council. 78

All the Toba did not, however, accept the choice. Instead, they wrote to both
the Municipal Council and the church council asking them to change the deci­sion. 79 They were identified as “brothers living near the railway station”. 80 This
statement implied that this group lived near the Chinese area in the eastern part
of the city. They must have opposed the decision because the Verleengde Balistraat
site was situated close to where they lived. The majority of the church council
might have thought that to have the church in the centre of town would mean
that it was close to all members, regardless of the area in which they lived.

The activities of the group not satisfied with the majority decision made an
impact half a year later. The Municipal Council in March 1927 felt obliged to take
up the question of land for the church again. The Council now cancelled its
previous generous offer, the reason given being that the majority of the congre­gation did not want that piece of land. The Municipal Council also stated that it

76 Admittedly, I do not have data as to whether there was a general policy with regard to the legal
aspects of church-building in Medan.
77 Tampubolon 1937, p. 53. Tampubolon stated that it was the Municipal Council that decided on
the two sites. He does not differentiate between the decisions made by them and the work of the
civil servants at the Municipal Land Bureau (Gemeentelijk bureau van grondzaken). With regard to
the location of the piece of land in the European area, Tampubolon said only that it was situated in
Polonia. It is, however, highly likely that the site was the same as the one later suggested by the
Municipal Council, namely the one on Hugo de Vrieslaan. See Notulen Gemeenteraad 15 July 1927.
78 Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
79 Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
80 Bat. “... angka dongan na di bangsal Kreta Api ...”. Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
was not its intention to cause problems in the relations between the RMG and the majority of the congregation.\textsuperscript{81}

The decision clearly illustrates that the congregation was divided over the issue half a year after the decision to choose the site in Polonia.\textsuperscript{82} The group that opposed the decision had obviously convinced the Council that they represented a considerable number of the Toba in town. It is possible that they had in fact been able to gather the support of a sizeable group in the community.

The Municipal Council had, even before the decision was made, made it clear to Warneck that they could not give the land to the Toba congregation. They were instead prepared to give it to the RMG.\textsuperscript{83} There do not appear to have been any formal legal reasons behind the unwillingness of the Municipal Council to give the piece of land to the Toba congregation. They did simply not want to give it to a group that was clearly not united. It was then better to let the RMG be responsible. It is also likely that the Ephorus felt that it would be better if the RMG remained in control, rather than leave the matter in the hands of quarrelling Toba.

The decision of the Municipal Council put the Toba in an uncomfortable and embarrassing position. It now seemed probable that they were running the risk of not being able to build a church at all in the foreseeable future. The group supporting the site in Polonia must have been frustrated that the formal decision of the church council could not be implemented. The RMG missionaries obviously did not have enough authority to be able to solve the problems and persuade the opposition to refrain from its activities.

For the group that argued for the site in the eastern part of the city, the decision of the Municipal Council to retain the piece of land originally given to the RMG was certainly a victory. On the other hand, it now seemed evident that the RMG would be able to decide for themselves about the building of the church, a development which must have been unwelcome.

\textsuperscript{81} See Notulen Gemeenteraad 2 March 1927, Bijlagen 2 March 1927, p. 13, besluit no. 38.
\textsuperscript{82} I have seen no sources that directly refer to how the conflict developed between September 1926 and March 1927.
\textsuperscript{83} Tampubolon 1937, p. 53. In the documentation from the Municipal Council, I have not found anything about this letter. It might have been sent by the Mayor on his personal initiative, with or without informal discussions with members of the Council.
The foundation of a mission station and independent Churches

The conflict made permanent and the formation of the Comité Parsadaan

On 8 April, a group consisting of “prominent persons in the Medan congregation” founded the Comité Parsadaan (Unification Committee). This organisation was founded a month after the decision of the Municipal Council to take back the piece of land. At the outset, it seemed to be an effort to bring the two differing groups together. As was usual in Toba conflicts, one would have expected that negotiations to reconcile the parties involved had been going on since the split decision of the church council. The Committee would then be a forum for negotiations between the two groups.

An article in Soara Batak, in which the Committee presented their point of view, reveals, however, that the intention was not to unite the two fractions. Instead, the goals of the Committee were:

1. To build a church for the Christian Batak as soon as possible in the name of the Christian Batak.
2. To make a very orderly and clear decision to clarify the position and rights of every member of the congregation, of those who lead the congregation and other rights.

The Committee also planned to:

... write and ask the members of the congregation to report to the Committee their right to vote. When this hearing has occurred, the Committee would ask the Ephorus (or his representative) to hold a large meeting ... so that it be fixed if he will learn from the votes of the many with regard to the church and in whose name it will be built: In (the name of) the RMG or the Christian Batak. If the Ephorus does not support the above mentioned-request, the wish of the Committee is to take all descent rights to court, so that the RMG (missionaries) will not use the money of the Church

---

84 Bat. “Angka pangituai ni huria Medan”. “Sintur” is the usual term for church elders but can also refer to community elders. Nyhus 1987, p. 283, n. 12.
only according to their own wishes. If the Ephorus does not agree to that, the Comité will sue him:
1. before the Mission Consul in Batavia. 2. before the Direction of the RMG in Barmen.87

There are several interesting elements in this text. The Committee wanted the church to be built in the name of the Christian Batak, i.e. to belong to the Toba congregation and not to the RMG. The suggestion that a large meeting be held to clarify the rights of the groups involved, the regular members, the church council and the RMG, indicates that they were not satisfied with the decision-making process. They felt that they had been side-stepped, even though they claimed to represent a large group within the congregation. The general mistrust of the RMG implied that they thought that the mission had manipulated the church council to make decisions that favoured the mission.

The statement that missionaries should not do as they wished with money belonging to the Church is rather difficult to interpret. The congregation had certainly collected a considerable amount of money for the project and the Committee felt that, if the members financed the church, it should also belong to them. The statement seems, however, to be of a more general nature and could also have referred to a general mistrust, caused by the financial crisis in the mission and the efforts to redeem it. Members of the Comité Parsadaan felt that the mission was ripping the Toba off, i.e. demanding much money for different purposes but not giving enough back.

The last threat to “sue” the Ephorus before the Dutch mission consul on Java and before his superiors in Germany was saying that he was not acting properly and would be reprimanded. The statement was also in line with the Toba tradition of appealing to higher authority if one felt mistreated.

In the article aimed at a wider distribution, primarily among the Toba living outside Medan, the conflict about where the church should be built is not mentioned explicitly. What comes into focus is instead the question of legal person and the issue of how the authority of the members should be related to the local church council and to the RMG missionaries.

87 "... bahenon man surat pangidoan tu angka leden ni Huria asa sahat tu Comité hak ni suara nasida (petekna). Molo dung pinatupa i mangula ma Comité, asa dipangido tu tuan Ephorus (manang wakilunya) asa dibahen loxoan bolon. ... asa ditotophon asa morguru tu suara ni na tumorop taringot tu hajongjongan ni pargereja i jala tu goar ni ise: Tu Rijnsche Zending do manang tu Kristen Batak. Molo so lomo roha ni Tuari Ephorus mangoloi pangidoan na di ginjang i luluai ni Comité ma susude hakna na patut nang tu pangadilan, asa unang dipake Rijnsche Zending angka hepeng gareja tu lomolomo sambing. Aut sura ndang dioloi Tuari Ephorus i, aluhonon ni Comité ma ibana tu: 1. Tu Consul ni Zending di Batavia. 2. Tu Directie ni Rijnsche Zending di Barmen.” Anonymous, Pajongjongonon ma gareja Kristen Batak Medan? (Building a Batak Christian Church in Medan?) Suara Batak, 7 May 1927. This part of the article is a almost verbatim translation of the Comité Parsadaan article, Deli Courant, 28 April 1927.
Were then the arguments put forward in this article being used only as a means of trying to obtain support from the Toba outside the city? One would not expect outsiders to have had a burning interest in the question of where exactly the church in Medan would be built. A substantial group would, on the other hand, have an interest in the question of the rights that local congregations had vis-à-vis the missionaries. Therefore, in their appeals for support among the wider Toba community members in Medan portrayed the conflict as a conflict with missionary paternalism. Their presentation appealed both to the general discontent with the mission and the more or less articulated nationalist sentiments championed by Hatopan Kristen Batak.

However, it is unlikely that the rhetoric was only the means employed by a dissatisfied group who were desperately seeking support. Instead, all the motives played a part in the formation of the Unification Committee. The feeling that they had been treated unfairly by the missionaries and the church council over the land issue was thus underpinned by the opinion that the church should belong to the Toba congregation. Furthermore, there was a general mistrust of the RMG with regard to the mission’s handling of money. The events surrounding the transfer of the Rev. Hutabarat had also strengthened the conviction that the RMG missionaries were authoritarian and did not respect the wills of local congregations. These sentiments were underpinned, at least among some in the group, by a more or less conscious nationalism, influenced by the rhetoric of the Hatopan Kristen Batak, in whose journal the Committee chose to present their case.

This analysis is supported by the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar, who claimed that the group was not homogeneous and consisted of people who had a variety of complaints. Some opposed the location of the church, others were opposed to the land being given to the RMG and others were unhappy with the new minister. Even though this picture of the Toba opposition is coloured by the intention to illustrate how sinister the Toba leaders could be and how diverse and inconsistent their critique of the mission was, it is still difficult to dismiss the missionary’s analysis. The important fact remains that people with these diverse motivations could actually form a group that was strong enough to oppose the missionaries as vigorously as they did. With regard to the position of the Rev. Sinaga, he, like the majority of the congregation, remained loyal to the RMG. The fact that some people in the Comité Parsadaan after the removal of Hutabarat did not accept him would have only strengthened his unwillingness to support them.

The conflict had by now developed from an internal conflict in the Toba congregation into a conflict in which a vocal minority was clearly and openly highly critical of how the RMG had handled the project to build a church.

88 Schneider, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1928. BM: 2.867. VEM.
In order to continue the project despite the opposition group, the acting Ephorus Landgrebe in June 1927 decided to approach the Municipal Council and apply for a piece of land in Polonia.\(^89\) This time, the Council, on 15 June, again decided to provide land to the RMG on Hugo de Frieslaan “according to normal conditions”. The mission would pay fl. 1 per square metre.\(^90\) The RMG would also have to submit a report on “the conditions” before the decision could be implemented.\(^91\)

It is evident that the RMG had lost its favourable position \(\text{vis-à-vis}\) the Municipal Council. This time, it had to accept that it could not expect any special favours from the Council. It would, for instance, have to pay for the piece of land. The Council felt that even if the piece of land was given to the RMG, they would not know if new problems arose. Therefore, the RMG would have to make a special report on the conditions before the decision could be implemented.

The group opposing the RMG missionaries might have had hopes that the Municipal Council would support them and not grant land to the RMG. But, after the new decision of the Council, it must have been obvious that the church would be built in the name of the RMG and not the Christian Batak.

Even though reconciliation seemed distant or even unrealistic, another effort to resolve the conflict was made. The Executive Committee of the HKBP Synod decided to send a Toba delegation to Medan.\(^92\) The fact that a delegation was formed meant that events in Medan were now regarded as a matter for the whole Toba community. It is also possible that the RMG missionaries were trying to use another venue in order to try to win people back. The delegation of three Toba arrived in Medan on 11 July and had conversations with people representing the two parties.\(^93\) An article in Soara Batak by someone who clearly sympathised with the group opposing the RMG referred to the contents of these discussions. The delegation gave thanks to the Unification Committee that had previously given “such good advice” (\textit{turgas na uli} \textit{i}).\(^94\) The phrase seems to presuppose that there had been some form of contact between Synod members and the Committee. Since many Toba at the time wanted more influence in the structure of the mission, the reference to the “good advice” was not merely a courteous phrase. It referred to the intentions that the Synod members and the Committee had in common.

\(^{89}\) Notulen Gemeenteraad 15 July 1927, punt 10.
\(^{90}\) “onder gebruikelijke voorwaarden”.
\(^{91}\) Bijlage Gemeenteraad 15 June 1927, besluit no. 105.
\(^{92}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 53. Tampubolon only says that the delegation represented the HKBP Synod, and it is likely that the specific action was initiated by the Executive committee.
\(^{93}\) Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
Furthermore, the delegation indicated that the Synod to be held the following year would apply to the Dutch administration to be recognised as a legal person, as Huria Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Church). The delegation obviously argued that the opposition group had to be patient and wait until the following year when the mission was expected to be transformed into a Church. The delegation also wanted to show that the work on the new constitution would have the effect that it would be possible to influence the missionaries and to increase Toba power in the Church, provided that it was done with patience. In reality Toba would have to wait until 1931 for official recognition of the Church, but it was institutionalised after the new Church order was accepted in October 1929. But the delegation did not succeed in its mission. Warneck claimed afterwards that it had been met with abuse. Tampubolon said that they had no success and returned home.

The lack of success might be attributed to the fact that the Toba representatives, in the eyes of the opposition, were seen to represent the missionaries. They were thus not impartial enough nor did they have sufficient authority to be accepted as mediators. The Unification Committee was not convinced by the message that a Batak Church would be founded. They suspected, and quite rightly, that ultimate power in the new structure would still be in the hand of the missionaries.

The failure of the delegation from the Synod shows that the conflict had become so serious that neither the missionary authority nor the Synod could persuade the opposing group to reconsider. The people involved must have realised that by now reconciliation would be very difficult, if not impossible.

On 13 July, the Municipal Council repeated its decision of June to give the piece of land to the RMG. The fact that the Council had to take up the issue again indicates that the opposition group had tried to convince them that it was wrong to give a piece of land to the RMG. When the Council, in spite of the argumentation, repeated its previous decision, the group opposing the RMG found themselves in a precarious situation. Because the RMG and the Municipal Council could not accept the demands of the group, it was forced into a situation in which it was faced with two options. They could either accept that the church was to be built in the name of the RMG in Polonia or leave the congregation.

---

96 See Chapter 2, section “Founding the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in 1930.”
97 Warneck to Deputation RMG. Pearaja 10 May 1928. BM: 2.909. VEM.
98 Tampubolon 1937, p. 53.
99 Biljlagen Gemeenteraad 13 July 1927.
The founding of Mission Batak on 17 July 1927

The result of the unsolved conflict was that the group that had opposed the RMG decided to leave the congregation and start its own Church, called Mission Batak (Batak Mission). The name suggests that they thought that they were the natural continuation of the “German mission”, i.e. the RMG. Formally, the new Church was founded on 17 July, when the Comité Parsadaan was dissolved and Mission Batak founded. The meeting was held at the Methodist Boys School.100 This venue illustrates the continuity between the two organisations. It could, however, be expected that not all who agreed with the goals of the Committee would actually welcome the decision to break with the RMG and found a separate Church. After all, the number of people that joined was small. From the beginning, the congregation had only 30 adult members.101

Representatives of Mission Batak repeated the arguments of the Unification Committee and said that the new Church had been founded because many members of the congregation felt that they had been cheated by the RMG and the church council regarding the plans to build a church. When they had realised that they would not be granted the opportunity to state their case at the Synod, they had started plans to “found a Church of their own” (jongjong sandiri di perhuriaonna).102 This phrase shows that the group were not satisfied with the pace by which RMG moved towards launching an autonomous Church. Instead, they acted upon the ideals that the RMG adhered to but, in their perspective, had not managed to put sufficiently into practice.

In Tampubolon’s account and the RGM missionary documents, the transformation of the Committee into a separate independent Church seems to be a clear-cut process. But there are clear indications that not all those who joined Mission Batak had a clear idea of the identity of the new organisation. An article in Soara Batak that reports the founding of the new Church illustrates the mixed feelings that members had with regard to the new organisation:

Now people considered if they should join the Catholics or Methodists, the brothers nearby. However, they make it clear to the readers that Mission Batak in Medan, that has become independent, does not need the support from anyone, only the support of God. They convey to all people that it is not the wish of Mission Batak to always be like the people of Israel who were slaves in Egypt ...

100 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 53f. Sianipar 1978, p. 64. With reference to Dutch sources, Perret makes the strange claim that the origin of Mission Batak was a secession from Hatopan Kristen Batak! Perret 1995, p. 273. Instead, Hatopan Kristen Batak enthusiastically embraced the new development.
101 Lempp 1976, p. 269.
Now like a firstborn, who only belongs to his mother and father, the people first founded Mission Batak, in spite that they live among people who are different. The quotation shows that there were supporters who were uncertain as to the identity of the new organisation and considered joining other denominations in Medan. They would in that case repeat the strategy of the group who left the RMG fold after the Rev. Hutabarat had been transferred to Pematang Siantar. There were also some who thought that they, in the pluralistic environment of Medan, they could not manage without the support from western missionaries.

The fact that Mission Batak was founded in the Methodist Boys School implies that the Methodist mission had previously had some contacts with the Unification Committee. It is possible that the Methodists had given permission for the group to meet there without really knowing its agenda. Only two days after Mission Batak had been founded, the missionary Schneider arrived and asked Archer, the Methodist missionary in Medan, not to let the Toba become members of the Methodist Church and not to allow Mission Batak hold services in the Methodist school. The next day, representatives of Mission Batak asked Archer to clarify the outcome of the meeting. He said that he could not allow them to hold services in the school because they had broken with the RMG and he did not want to compromise his relations with the German mission. If they decided to join the Methodist Church he would, on the other hand, readily accept them. The Toba concluded that Archer was being hypocritical. Because they did not join the Methodists, they were henceforth not allowed to use the Methodist school.

Recalling the previous example of Toba wanting to join the Methodists, the RMG missionary in both cases wanted to prevent them from becoming Methodists, while Archer in the latter example adopted an ambivalent position. He did not want to compromise his relations with the RMG by accepting Toba into his congregation but was inclined to accept them if they wanted to become Methodists.

These events show that Mission Batak initially wanted to cultivate relations with the Methodist mission. The most likely reason was that they needed a place to wor-

---


105 Lempp 1976, p. 269.
ship and wanted to maintain contacts with the Methodist missionaries. But it is also likely that some supporters of Mission Batak in fact wanted to become Methodists.

Despite the doubts and uncertainties of some of its supporters and the contact they wanted to maintain with the Methodists, a significant group showed a strong determination to remain independent, to be free from the authority of Europeans and not to be “slaves in Egypt” any longer.

Why did the group then decide to found an independent Church? An obvious point is that the conflict ending in the formation of Mission Batak was neither the first nor the last conflict in Toba congregations. In Tapanuli, conflicts would occasionally lead members of one HKBP congregation to found another within the HKBP or to join a congregation nearby. It was only when other denominations had been established in Tapanuli that the option to join another Church became possible. With regard to the relations between the RMG and the Toba, there had been many instances in which the latter felt mistreated by the mission. Some of these feelings were channelled into the Hatopan Kristen Batak. But in spite of the often harsh criticism of the mission, the Hatopan Kristen Batak did not by themselves suggest that a separate Toba Church be founded.

It appears that the time was ripe for the founding of independent Toba Churches. Punguan Kristen Batak in Jakarta had been founded on 10 July, a week before Mission Batak, and Huria Christen Batak in Pematang Siantar was founded on 1 May. The timing suggests that the founding of these three Churches was co-ordinated. Hutauruk denies this, however, and states clearly that the failure of the Churches to unite when they came to know of the existence of one another shows that the three efforts were not co-ordinated. Hutauruk’s conclusion is supported by the fact that the articles in Soara Batak that referred to the founding of Mission Batak did not indicate that the founders of that Church knew of the other Churches that had just been founded. It therefore seems that the three Churches were locally limited expressions of discontent with the RMG and that the idea of founding independent Churches was rooted in local conditions. It appears that the move towards an independent Toba Church that the RMG missionaries had initiated led the Toba groups to found their own Churches. They did not want to wait for the missionary-led process to come to completion, because they suspected, and in retrospect quite rightly, that missionaries would anyway remain the supreme power in the new Church.

During the coming year, Mission Batak made efforts to build up their new organisation. The chairman (voorzitter) of the Church was a layperson, Andreas

---

In December 1927, Kenan Hutabarat, a former minister who had been suspended by the RMG, was installed as their minister. On this occasion, the editor of Soara Batak, Sutan Sumurung, was present together with European clergy from the Protestantsche Kerk and the Adventist mission. The willingness to invite Europeans on this occasion should be interpreted as a political consideration. Mission Batak feared that, only a few months after the communist rebellion had been crushed, they would be suspected of being radical nationalists, if they did not invite Europeans.

In February 1936, Mission Batak received the status of a legal person. In 1934, they built a semi-permanent church on jalan Balam and in 1937 they started the Public Christian School of Mission Batak (Sekolah Kristen Umum Mission Batak) on Jalan Merak that had the status of a HIS. Both church and school were situated in the eastern part of the city where the people who initially opposed the proposal that the Church should be built in the European area lived.

Except for building up infrastructure in Medan, Mission Batak also tried to expand activities outside the city. In 1932, for instance, they started to propagate for their cause in Pematang Siantar. After that, the Church did not expand much, and only a few more congregations were founded. There were in 1969 five congregations associated with the Church, the original one in Medan, two in Pematang Siantar and one each in Tebing Tinggi and Padang Sidempuan. The image of Mission Batak is that, once they had been able to establish themselves as an independent unit and constitute their independent barajraon, they became rather isolated and insignificant to others.

After Mission Batak had been founded, it might have been expected that those who were dissatisfied with the RMG would have left and the situation would have calmed down. But later developments showed that the potential for conflict had not disappeared and among those who did not join Mission Batak there was a large number that would soon start to oppose the mission openly again.

The fact that the Rev. Sinaga is not mentioned in the sources that relate to this conflict shows that, as the leader of the congregation loyal to the RMG, he did not take independent initiatives. In relation to the new RMG interest in Medan and the local mistrust, he adopted a position in which he supported the RMG but

---

110 Mailr. no. 450 geh/36, p. 9. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra. ARA.
111 Lempp 1976, pp. 269, 271.
112 Bregenstroth, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1932. BM: 2367. VEM.
113 Lempp 1976, p. 270.
kept a low profile, waiting to see how things developed and whether they would have an impact on his own position.

A mission station in Medan urgent

At the same time as the group decided to found an independent Church, the project to build a church building for the congregation affiliated to the RMG continued. On 25 September 1927 the son of J. Hemmers laid the first stone. On this occasion, many prominent Europeans were present, such as the Governor, the Mayor, the local military commander and the ministers of the two Dutch congregations in Medan. Among the Toba guests Josia Hutabarat was noted. In May the following year, the church was inaugurated in the presence of Warneck and the same Europeans who had attended on the previous occasion.114

When the church had been inaugurated, some members of the church council approached Warneck and asked him to increase the number of people working in Medan and suggested that one of them should be a European minister.115 Soon afterwards, the church council held a meeting at which Warneck was present.116 On this occasion, Tampubolon, as spokesperson for the Council, gave a presentation in which he stressed that the congregation needed more personnel. Although the Toba congregation was the largest in Medan and growing, other denominations had more clergy and teachers. The personnel of the congregation had also to work in a large area of the east coast and even in Kuta Raja in the province of Aceh. It was also stressed that “members of the congregation in Medan consisted of people from all the good villages in Tapanuli who bring their place, i.e. their different adat and character.”117 Toba migrants came to live in a city with people “that are different in nationality, skin colour, language, religion, profession, festivities and skills.”118 A European missionary should work there because “the work in the congregation in Medan was more difficult than in other congregations.”119 Tampubolon and the church council thought that the demanding work in Medan justified stationing a missionary there. The main difficulties were that Medan was a pluralistic city and that the Toba community in itself consisted of people from various areas in Tapanuli.

---

114 Tampubolon 1937, p. 54.
115 Tampubolon 1937, p. 55.
116 Tampubolon did not indicate when the meeting took place.
117 Bat. “Ia ruas ni Huria Medan, i na angka halak Christen na marroan sian ganup desa nu ualu ni Residentie Tapanuli, na masiboan luatna, ragam ni adatna dohot parrohaonna.”
118 Bat. “... na marmansam bangso, kulit, ragam ni hata, ugarmon, ‘ulang, hariburon dohot hapistanan.”
119 Bat. “Umaol do ulang parhuriaon di Medan sian di Huria na asing.” Tampubolon 1937, p. 55. Tampubolon did not make the remark that he was the one who held the speech, but because he quotes the speech in extenso, it is most likely that he himself was the author.
Before relating these events, Tampubolon did not mention anything about the long-standing plans of the RMG to station a missionary in the city. It therefore appears as if Tampubolon also in this context stressed the voluntary initiative of the congregation. The intention was to show that it was the Toba in Medan themselves who initiated the development, not autocratic RMG missionaries. On the other hand, it seems that, in relation to the project to build a church, Tampubolon shared the view of many Toba that the plan to develop Medan into a mission station was introduced separately from and later than the project to build the church. Most Toba would support the latter project, but many would oppose the former.

This attitude is apparent from the fact that a group within the congregation did not support the request of the church council for a RMG missionary. Even in the church council itself, some members were opposed to a missionary being stationed there. The request also carried implications for the Rev. Sinaga. If the RMG stationed a European missionary in Medan, it would imply that he would be directly under his authority. He would be deprived of the relative independence that he and his predecessors in Medan had been accustomed to. It is therefore highly likely that Sinaga belonged to the group in the Church council who did not welcome the initiative.

Warneck's response to the congregation's proposal was that he would accept the suggestion. The missionaries had already made quite definite plans that they would soon station a missionary in Medan, but the formation of Mission Batak and the request from the church council appears to have finally made Warneck take action.

In June 1928, the Missionary Conference decided to station in Medan the experienced missionary Theis, one of the pioneers of the RMG's mission in Simalungun. The decision implied that Theis's mission station, Seribu Dolok, would be placed under the auspices of the missionary in Pematang Siantar. The decision was, however, made only "after lengthy discussions" (Nach langen überlegen) and it was clearly stated that Theis wanted to continue his long-standing work among the Simalungun Batak. It is evident that he was unwilling to move from Simalungun, where he had spent many years, all the more so because it implied that his former parish would be run from the station in Pematang Siantar. It took some forceful argumentation by Warneck to make him agree to be transferred to Medan.

120 Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.
121 Tampubolon 1937, p. 55.
122 Warneck, Begleitschrift zum Protokoll Jahreskonferenz Sipoholon 1928, 30 June 1928. BM: 2.890. VEM.
On 28 June, the missionary in Pematang Siantar, Schneider, wrote to the congregation in Medan and said that Theis would be stationed there from 8 July, provided that the church council accepted it.\textsuperscript{123} It seems that the missionary, because of previous experiences in Medan, had realised that a forceful approach could lead to trouble and therefore waited for the council to accept the decision. Schneider might also from the outset have been aware that the whole congregation would not support his suggestion.

This careful approach did not prevent conflict from breaking out. On 2 July, a letter was sent to the church council which stated that there were 80 people who objected to Theis becoming minister in Medan.\textsuperscript{124}

The following day, the council held a meeting, at which a majority was in favour of the suggestion from Pematang Siantar. On 8 July, Theis was brought to Medan by Schneider and installed as the new minister in Medan.\textsuperscript{125} In practice, this had the effect that Medan was disconnected from Pematang Siantar, from where the missionary had exercised authority since the founding of the congregation. Medan had now become a mission station.

For the missionary, the situation was anything but comfortable. Theis found himself forcibly working in an unfamiliar environment and among people with whom he was not acquainted. Apart from his role in preparing J. Hutabarat for ordination in 1914, he had had very little contact with the Toba in Medan. He was used to working among peasants who had little, if any, education and who lived in a feudal society in which the Simalungun raja supported the mission and paid missionaries due respect. In Medan, the situation was very different. The congregation was made up of second- or third-generation Christians. They were comparatively well educated, and many of them were more or less fluent in Dutch. They were used to living outside Tapanuli and beyond the control of the traditional authorities, including raja and missionaries. For the people in Medan, it would be difficult to accept him as an authority, even without the recent conflicts. Theis's ability to handle conflicts had not been documented, and Warneck thought that he was not a "man of struggle" (\textit{Kampfnatur}).\textsuperscript{126} He soon longed to return to Simalungun.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{123} Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{124} Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{125} Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{126} Warneck to Schomburg, Pearaja 16 August 1928. BM: 2.909, VEM.
\textsuperscript{127} Warneck to Inspector, Pearaja 11 April 1930. BM: 2.909, VEM. Another possible reason why Theis was not comfortable could have been the attitude of his wife. Tampubolon pointed out that, when Theis moved to Medan, his wife did not initially accompany him. Tampubolon 1937, p. 56. This is the only time Tampubolon mentioned Theis's wife, probably because her absence at his installation was regarded as exceptional.
Renewed opposition and Partai 123

The fact that a missionary had in the end been stationed in Medan did not mean that the opposition group stopped its activities. Instead, they collected more names to their list of 80 and claimed that they now represented 123 members of the congregation. They called themselves Partai 123 (the 123 Party), sent a letter of protest to the Ephorus and reported the events in the local press.228

In assessing the numerical strength of the group, the starting-point is that members of Partai 123 included only men.129 If they were married, they represented also their families. It was not thought to be suitable for a woman to partake in this kind of activity. In 1926, the congregation as a whole had 1018 members.130 The conclusion is that, if Partai 123 consisted of 123 persons, they represented a large group within the congregation. W. Lumbantobing, who observed these events in his early teenage years, claimed that the group, with which he had sympathies, represented a majority of the congregation.131 Because it is likely that not all who sympathised with Partai 123 joined the organisation, this might well have been the case.

The goals and demands of the group appear in a letter they sent to the church council on 16 July 1928: "In the name of the 123 members of the congregation in Medan, we have expelled You from our church council. ... What follows is that you are not allowed to hold meetings as a church council. The administration of the money does not belong to you." Furthermore, the aim of Partai 123 was said to be "... to regulate the constitution of the congregation with regard to the rights of the members, the church council, the chairman and the Ephorus. When this has been done, a vote will be arranged. A person has to support the new regulations to be eligible for election." From the letter, it is clear that the group considered the church council to be dissolved and deprived of authority. Nothing is explicitly said about the missionary in Medan, but it must be assumed that the group thought that a new constitution would force the missionary to leave.

128 Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.
129 See the list of Partai 123. B. P. H. Gultom, private archive.
130 Tampubolon 1937, p. 73.
131 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
132 Bat. "Dohot goar ni 123 leden ni Huria Medan nunga diharuathon hamu sian hekerkaadonmuna. Asa mamungka sian sadai on ndang boi be hamu trambahen rapot ni Kerkaad. Kasadministratie na adong di hamu ... ."
133 Bat. "... pahothon ma aturan ni Huria taringot tu hak ni Leden, Kerkaad, Voorzitter dohot Ephorus. Dung ture i, i pe asa pamasaon pamilliton jala ingkon mangunduk nasida tu aturar na imbaru asa boi diangkat." Partai 123/ W. Hutasoit, Heini L. Tobing, Gerhard Parapat to Kerkaad Huria Kristen Batak, Medan 16 July 1928. BM: 2.852. VEM.
Theis soon realised that he had not only a substantial part of the congregation against him but also the Toba minister. When he arrived in Medan, Sinaga refused to give him the key to the church and the congregational archive. Theis tried several times to make appointments with him but without success. At last, Theis called the police and they broke into Sinaga’s house in order to obtain the key and books, events that were severely criticised in the Batak press. Sinaga also complicated Theis’s contacts with members of the congregation. When Theis called a meeting and asked Sinaga to notify the congregation, Sinaga did not obey the instruction. Instead, Sinaga himself was the only one who turned up at the time appointed by Theis. These events clarify that Sinaga did not accept being placed under the authority of a European missionary. Compared with the previous conflict that led to the formation of Mission Batak, Sinaga did not adopt a cautious position, because now his authority as leader of the congregation was at stake. Consequently, he did everything in his power to make it difficult for Theis to make contact with the congregation and to take possession of the church. Despite his opposition, Sinaga appears not to have joined Partai 123. According to W. Lumbantobing, he hesitated to become a member of the organisation for which he had sympathies. To do so would have led to his immediate dismissal.

On 31 July, a meeting was arranged at which the two opposing groups in the congregation, Theis and Warneck met to discuss the situation. The meeting is said to have been “not in order” (goor) and the conflict was not resolved. A struggle arose in which Ignatius Hutasoit, of Partai 123, and Theis competed as to who should chair the meeting. The fact that Warneck attended implies that he did not believe in Theis’s ability to handle the situation. This must have been obvious to the Toba, and Warneck’s presence implied that Theis’s authority was on the decrease. Because the meeting did not produce any positive results, the missionaries must have become convinced that they could not use their authority to resolve the conflict. Reconciliation was not possible.

Immediately after this meeting, Warneck decided to remove Sinaga from Medan. The minister refused and, as a result, he was dismissed and removed from the

---


135 Theis, Bericht Medan 28/29. BM: 2.852. VEM.

136 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.

137 Tampubolon 1937, p. 56.

138 This is the likely conclusion from the statement in an article in Soara Batak that the meeting did not approve of Theis being chairman and instead choose Hutasoit. Anonymous, Halumlamon ni Huria Christen Batak Medan (The confusion in Huria Christen Batak Medan). Soara Batak 18 August 1928.

139 Warneck to Schomburg, 7 August 1928. BM: 2.909. VEM.
ministry. In December 1928, Sinaga approached the Ephorus and "confessed his sins". Warneck planned a year of probation for him in the congregation at Baros on the coast west of Tapanuli. Sinaga did not accept the condition and, seven months later, a group of Toba clergy tried to persuade him to confess his mistakes. In 1932, Sinaga had again repeatedly approached the Ephorus and asked for pardon and to be reinstated in office. The Annual Conference in 1932 did not accept this. The missionaries thought that Sinaga had already had many chances to return to the Church and that the congregations would not understand such a move. After this verdict, Sinaga associated himself with the independent Churches. Later the same year, Mission Batak expanded to Pematang Siantar. Sinaga now came from Medan and was employed as a propagandist for their cause. In 1933, he helped the leader of Huria Christen Batak in Pematang Siantar in a campaign, and later he became minister of that Church in Pematang Siantar.

These events show that Sinaga was initially ambivalent in his support for the newly founded independent Churches. Although he had taken pains to oppose the RMG missionary, he later sought reinstatement in office. The ambiguity of Sinaga stemmed from the fact that he was torn between his conviction that the Church should in reality become independent and the fact that, as a minister in the new Churches, he would not have a salary as a full-time minister. This was the reason why only a very few Toba ministers joined the independent Churches. The epilogue to the story is that in 1949, when HKBP had become a Church with a Toba leadership, Sinaga applied and was reinstalled as a minister of HKBP.

In Medan, Sinaga was replaced by a Toba minister, J. Sihombing. Justin Sihombing was born in Pangaribuan on Samosir in 1890 and was a first-generation Christian. He graduated from the seminary in Sipoholon in 1912 to become a teacher. The missionaries appointed him headmaster of a school in his home area. In 1917, he passed the test to become a government teacher. As a government teacher, he would have earned six times as much. Because the missionary opposed his leaving and more than doubled his salary, he remained employed by the RMG. As a teacher, he also became a tutor of missionary children. In 1925, he graduated from the Sipoholon seminary and was appointed by Warneck as travel-

140 Sianipar 1978, pp. 64f.
141 Protokoll der Sitzung des Moderamens in Pearaja am 11-12 Dezember 1928. BM: 2.890. VEM.
142 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz, 1 July 1929. BM: 2.890. VEM.
143 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz, 7-13 June 1932. BM: 2.890. VEM.
144 Bregenstroth, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1932. BM: 2.867. VEM.
145 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1933. BM: 2.890. VEM. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, May 1939, Mair. no. 766 geb/39. ARA.
146 Kantor Besar HKBP to Tuan Pd Willy Sinaga di P Sisatar, Tarutung 21 September 1949. HKBP archives.
ling minister. His duty was to supervise congregations and report to the Ephorus, first in Tapanuli and later on the east coast and Aceh. During the years 1926-28, he worked on Samosir where the majority of the people still adhered to traditional religion. This short biographical sketch shows that by the late 1920s Sihombing had extensive experience in working in the Church. The missionaries generally trusted him to master also difficult tasks. On the other hand, Sihombing was clearly independent-minded. In 1928, for instance, he made the Synod and missionaries agree to make the minutes available in Toba Batak for everyone to read. Until then, minutes had obviously been written only in German and the contents were orally communicated by missionaries when needed.

In October 1928, when the conflict in Medan was at its height, Sihombing was called to see Warneck, who wanted to station him in Medan. At first, Sihombing refused, stating that he was not mature enough to settle the turmoil in Medan, which he had experienced on his way to Aceh. After a long discussion, in which Warneck could in the end only furiously appeal to his authority as Ephorus, Sihombing gave in and accepted Warneck’s proposal. He took up his new position in November 1928.

In Medan, Sihombing at first took it as his main task to visit people who opposed the RMG and the church council, in order to persuade them to reconsider their stand. His efforts were, to begin with, not successful. Instead, he was approached by members of the group who wanted to recruit him to their cause. They also demanded that he should turn over the church key and congregational archives to them. Sihombing refused. He had by then became disappointed and was convinced that he could not make them return to the congregation affiliated to the RMG. Despite his misgivings, the developments in the early 1930s, which will be discussed in the next chapter, show that Sihombing played an important role in consolidating the HKBP in Medan.

Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo, 5 August 1928

The decision of the church council to accept a missionary in Medan and the dismissal of Sinaga had the effect that the group opposing the missionaries decided to take more definite measures. On 5 August, Partai 123 thus changed its

---

147 J. Sihombing’s biography is adapted from Nyhus 1987, pp. 153f. The only change I have made is to mention that Sihombing ceased his work in Samosir in 1928, Sianipar 1978, p. 66, not in 1929, as Nyhus claims.
148 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1928. BM 2.890. VEM.
149 Sianipar 1978, pp. 65f.
150 Sianipar 1978, p. 66.
name and became Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo (the First Christian Batak Congregation in Medan). The new organisation elected a board with Lamsana Hutagalung as president and Waldemar Hutasoit as secretary. With regard to its loyalties, the meeting decided that “We remain obedient to the leadership of the Zending Batak.” The statement implied that they had rejected the authority of the missionaries and the Batak Synod, but still entertained hopes of Zending Batak, the Toba mission organisation. Regarding the congregation in Medan, they decided that “Ours are the present assets and debts, means, property and money of the congregation in Medan.”

Even though the term “hurid” may also be translated “Church”, the organisation initially did not appear as a new independent Church. Instead, the new organisation regarded themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Toba congregation in Medan. This was emphasised when the new organisation called itself “the first” congregation in Medan, probably influenced by the pattern set by the Methodists and Baptists in calling a congregation “the first” when it was the first one established in a city. On the other hand, the group was still often referred to as Partai 123 even after they had become Huria Christen Batak Medan.

Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo started to hold separate services, first in a cinema (the Empire Bioscoop) but later in a hall at the Municipal Hospital. The fact that they held separate services did not imply that they had given up the struggle to be recognised as the true representatives of the congregation. In the evening of 13 January 1929, about 80 persons broke into the church on Hugo de Vrieslaan and stayed there for an hour. They clearly wanted to demonstrate that the church belonged to them. Theis called the police and a group of people was arrested. They were later convicted of stealing fl. 250 from the congregation.

The group also started a legal process to claim the resources of the congregation. To this end, they claimed that the congregation in Medan had nothing to do with the RMG and wanted to be recognised as a congregation within the Protestantsche Kerk. The missionaries opposed this line of reasoning. Müller argued that even though the HKBP consisted of independent congregations, they were

---

151 Bat. “Hot do hita morinduk tu induk ni Zending Batak.” Notulen dohot Verslag Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo 5 August 1928 in Empire Bioscoop. BM: 2.852. VEM.
152 Bat. “Hot do hita dohot nampuna rasa utang, singër, arta dohot hepeng ni Huria Medan na xdong sahat tu ari on.” Notulen dohot Verslag Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo 5 August 1928 in Empire Bioscoop. BM: 2.852. VEM.
153 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
154 Sianipar 1978, pp. 66f.
155 Tampubolon 1937, p. 57.
156 Huria Medan, Soara Batak, 16 February 1929, signed by Ignatius Hutasoit, Lamsana Hutagalung and other members of Partai 123.
united as a whole under the leadership of Ephorus Warneck. Müller also referred to his previous contacts with the congregation and pointed out that he had been responsible for the congregation in co-operation with the Dutch congregations in Medan.157

In the end, the group that opposed the RMG lost the legal process.158 Huria Christen Medan Parjolo now developed into an independent congregation and they established contact with Huria Christen Batak in Pematang Siantar. In May 1932, the congregation officially joined Huria Christen Batak.159 In 1940, they were able to lay the first stone of their own church on Jalan Dahlia, at present in the centre of the city south of Jalan Suprapto.160

Underlying factors in the Toba Batak Community

Social and political dynamics

In the previous discussion, it was apparent that the mistrust of the RMG missionaries was a key element in the conflicts. But, in order to gain a clearer understanding, we have to ask: why did such conflicts appear in the RMG congregation in Medan in the mid-1920s?

The fact that the Toba in Medan represented a new urban elite outside Tapanuli certainly played a part. According to W. Lumbantobing, the Toba in Medan "were educated and not obedient any longer."161 Some of these urban migrants had originally expected a career within the RMG but had in the end become white-collar workers. Almost all the elders of Huria Christen Batak Parjolo in Medan in the 1930s were, for instance, former students of the RMG seminary in Sipoholon who had obtained good employment in Medan.162 For various reasons, they had not continued their schooling within the limits of the RMG system. They might have chosen to leave on their own initiative or been dismissed from the seminary for one reason or another. It is possible that some of them felt that they had been mistreated by the missionaries, a fact that contributed to their willingness to join the new organisation. In these groups, the message of Hatopan Kristen Batak would be met with sympathy.

157 Müller to Landraad, Panguruan 3 April 1930. BM: 2.852. VEM.
158 Sianipar 1978, p. 67
159 Tampubolon 1976, p. 45.
160 The agenda (Agenda tu: Hamameakkonbaaru ojahan di Huria Christen Batak Medan) is preserved in B. P. H. Gultom’s private archive.
161 Ind. “Sudah berpendidikan, tidak patuh lagi”. Interview, W. Lumbantobing
It is also striking that the three independent Churches that were founded in the 1920s were set up in Jakarta, Medan and outside Pematang Siantar, where the Toba had migrated from the beginning of the century. Migration obviously implied that the traditional social system, of which the RMG had become an integral part, did not maintain its grip on the migrants. It made it more likely that they would oppose the missionaries.\textsuperscript{163}

With regard to the possible impact from the nationalist movement, Hutauruk quotes a Dutch resident of Tapanuli who in 1937 claimed that the nationalist demands had little or no impact on the strivings of the independent Churches. Hutauruk supports this line of thought and concludes that the nationalist demands were not an important motive behind the formation of independent Churches but “ethnic and Church motives”.\textsuperscript{164}

Contrary to Hutauruk’s conclusion, Warneck in 1928 claimed that the primary background to the movement for Church independence was the nationalist movement. According to him, it was not possible to claim independence in the political realm and that they therefore tried to claim it in the Church.\textsuperscript{165} This argument was certainly one way of deflating the opposition and putting the blame on factors outside Tapanuli. On the other hand, Warneck had visited Medan several times and had met with leaders of the group opposing him and the RMG. During the heated debates, it is likely that arguments influenced by the nationalist rhetoric were used. One have to assume that the demise of the Communist party and the rise of inclusive nationalism had been observed by the Toba in Medan, on both the national and the regional level. These developments inspired them to oppose the RMG. Hatopan Kristen Batak was also influential in promoting nationalist ideals among the Toba in Medan. To become an outright nationalist was dangerous at the time and a more feasible method was to try to make an impact on the RMG, the great \textit{sabala} organisation in Toba society. Contrary to Hutauruk, I think, in other words, that the development of the nationalist movement was a significant, indirect factor behind the development of independent Churches.

\textsuperscript{163} For a similar analysis, see Hutauruk 1980, pp. 188ff.
\textsuperscript{164} Hutauruk 1980, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{165} Warneck to Schomburg, 7 August 1928. BM: 2.909. VEM.
The role of sub-ethnic tensions

Notwithstanding that the social and political elements were important in the formation of organisations independent of the RMG, there is an additional factor that needs to be brought into the discussion. That factor is the sub-ethnic tensions.

In 1929, Warneck, despite his earlier claim that the nationalist movement was the main cause of the opposition in Medan, claimed that “the most basic reason leading to the splits in Medan and Batavia is disagreements and conflicts between representatives for different tribes and areas. This shows everywhere they live together ...”166. Regarding Medan, he might have been informed by J. Sihombing. In a report, he observed that people in Medan were divided into two groups. On the one hand, clans from the Silindung Valley, Pahae, a small area south-east of Silindung, and Humbang, an area north of the Valley towards Lake Toba, had joined Partai 123. On the other, clans from Toba, the area around the southern part of Lake Toba remained loyal to the RMG.167 Furthermore, in 1929, the editor of Soara Batak acknowledged the split between the people from Toba and the people from Silindung, Humbang and Pahae, and strongly advised the Toba in Medan to unite.168 Another example of sub-ethnic tensions is that, in early 1928, Batak Sport, the organisation that in 1924 had been split between Muslim and Christian Batak, had been divided between two groups. People from the Toba area formed the Parsaraan Voetballvereniging, while the people from Silindung, Humbang and Pahae formed Horas Voetbal Vereniging.169

Hutauruk only observed Sihombing’s statement but was not willing to substantiate his observation or to attempt to identify the causes of the split between different groups. He still claims that in the face of the sub-ethnic tensions the opposition to the RMG was unimportant when Huria Kristen Medan Parjolo was founded.170 In the following pages, I shall broaden the perspective and include more primary materials in order to modify Hutauruk’s analysis.

The first point is that, when Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo was founded, the first board consisted almost exclusively of men from the Toga Sobu clan.

166 „Die tiefste Grund der spaltungen in Medan und Batavia is Unstimmigkeiten und Reibungen zwischen den Vertretern der verschiedenen Stämme und Landschaften. Das macht überall da, wo diese durcheinander gewurfelt sind ...“. Warneck, Ephoralbericht über 1928/29. BM: 2.910. VEM.
167 Bericht ni Justin Sihombing 1928. BM: 2.946. VEM.
168 According to him, those to blame for this development were the RMG missionaries and Catholic and Gereformeerd European in Medan, and the Batak press! S.M.S. (Sutan Sumurung), Persatuan! (Unite!) Soara Batak, 9 March 1929.
169 Interview, W. Lumbantobing. Soara Batak, 9 March 1929, includes an announcement that from the beginning of 1928 Batak Sport had become Horas Voetbal Vereniging.
group, the dominant clan-group in Silindung. Seven out of nine members repre-
sented that group, one represented the closely related Toga Sumba group and one
belonged to the Lontung moiety. 171

A more diversified picture appears from an analysis of the two, and very likely
the only remaining, lists of members of Partai 123. The first is a list of 116 names
preserved by B. P. H. Gultom, the son of one of the founders of the group. The
last page with the remaining seven names is missing. 172 The second is a list of 85
names written down by Theis and kept in the RMG archives. 173 Theis had obvi-
ously started to collect information about who had joined Partai 123. He also
copied a section of 129 names from the list of members of the congregation and
made a list of 21 people of the 85 who were not members of his congregation. 174

In analysing these lists, several problems appear. The two lists have 54 names
in common and consequently a significant number of names appear on only one
list. An obvious conclusion is that several lists of people belonging to Partai 123
circulated in the Toba community. It is possible that some decided to drop out
when Theis made his enquiry, which would account for the fact that only 85 out
of 123 names appear on his list. It is possible that Gultom’s list has names that
were added later. Some manipulation of the list of members of Partai 123 is not
out of the question. The fact that 22 persons on Theis’s list were not members of
the RMG congregation also points in this direction. It is possible that they repre-
sent Toba who were not registered members of the congregation but still sup-
ported Partai 123. The fact that 51 of the 54 names that appear on both Gultom’s
and Theis’s lists cannot be found in the list of 129 members shows that Theis
must have had an additional and more complete list, in order to determine who in
Partai 123 were members of the congregation.

Despite these problems one has to point out that there is a significant coher-
ence between the two lists. There are 54 persons who can quite certainly be said
to have been members of Partai 123 and a group of others who may have been
connected with the group.

The strategy that I shall use in presenting my analysis of the clans on these
lists is to include all names. It is based on the conclusion that there is no signifi-

171 The people from Toga Soba are 2 Lumbantobing, Hutagalung, Panggabean, Simorangkir, Sitompul
and Hutabarat. The others are Hutasoit (Togi Sumba) and Sinaga (Lontung). See Notulen Tevens
Verslag rapot godang ni leden ni Huria Christen Batak Medan di aru Minggu 5 Augustus 1928. BM:
2.852. VEM.
172 Anggota Partij 123. Private archive B. P. H. Gultom.
173 Untitled list of 85 persons. BM: 2.852. VEM.
174 List von Namen, die nicht im Kirchenbuch der Batakischen Christengemeinde Medan zu finden
sind. BM: 2.852. VEM. Ledenlijst. BM: 2.852. VEM.
cant difference between the two lists with regard to the relative domination of clans from different areas.

Among the total number of persons connected with Partai 123, I have been able to identify 143 in the clan system. Among them are 83 from the closely related clan-groups Nai Pospos (7 names), Toga Sobu (59) and Toga Sumba (17), who dominate in Silindung, Humbang and Pahae. These three groups make up 58% of the members. The Lontung moiety, a separate group based on Samosir but found in many other parts of North Tapanuli, is represented by 25 names. If added to the previous figure, the two groups make up 76% of the total supporters of Partai 123. Furthermore, 19 names are from the Nai Suanon group based in both Toba and Humbang.

These figures have to be correlated with the relative size of the clans, as indicated in the list of 129 members of the RMG congregation. The assumption is that it represents a cross-section of the total group of members. The three clan-groups representing Silindung, Pahae and Humbang represent 32% of the members on the list. The conclusion is that these clans are clearly over-represented among the members of Partai 123 in relation to their relative size in the Medan congregation.

On the level of individual clans, some interesting dynamics can be observed. By far the largest clan is Lumbantobing, of the Toga Sobu clan-group, with 25 names connected with Partai 123. The clan is represented by 10 names on the member list of the congregation. On the other hand, not a single member of the Siahaan clan of the Nai Suanon group is connected with Partai 123. Seven names appear on the list of members of the Medan congregation, which makes it the second largest clan after the Lumbantobings. In contrast, there are six members of Partai 123 who were members of the Simanjuntak clan which is closely related to the Siahaans.

From the analysis of these lists, it appears that the opposition was dominated by the Nai Pospos, Toga Sobu and Toga Sumba clan-groups, led by the Lumbantobing clan. They managed to obtain significant support from the Lontung moiety. But there was also a group of people from various clans, such as the Simanjuntaks. The group supporting the RMG was led by the Siahaan clan, which drew support from other clans in their area.

In relation to the composition of the first Board of the Huria Christen Batak Medan Parjolo, the conclusion is that Partai 123 initially mainly had support from

---

175 A small number of names is not identifiable in the Toba clan system. They may have been pseudonyms used by persons who did not want to be identified.
176 1 Naipospos, 30 Toga Sobu and 11 Toga Sumba out of 129 names.
Silindung, Humbang and Pahae clans, while other clans also joined their opposition to the RMG. At a later stage, conflicts with regard to the strategy against the RMG meant that sub-ethnic tensions increased. As a consequence, people not belonging to the majority dropped off when Christen Batak Medan Parjolo was founded. It appears that the conflict that started in opposition to the RMG increasingly became a sub-ethnic conflict. This development could be the reason why Warneck, after first attributing the conflicts in Medan to the nationalist movement, later stressed sub-ethnic factors.

The conclusion is that sub-ethnic tensions played an important role in the foundation of the Huria Kristen Medan Parjolo. It is actually possible that sub-ethnic tensions were also a factor behind the formation of the Mission Batak. Their first chairman, Andreas Lumbantobing, and first minister, Kenan Hutabarat, for instance, both belonged to clans from Silindung.

In relation to Toba Batak society in general, sub-ethnic tensions appeared when people from different regions realised that they had unequal opportunities, for instance, in the field of education. With regard to the Simalungun area, Toba Batak pushed aside other ethnic groups, especially Simalungun Batak. They slowly transformed Pematang Siantar into a Toba Batak city and the area around into a land of Toba Batak farmers. Castles made the observation that the rural migration, apart from creating ethnic tensions with other ethnic groups, also caused problems between the Toba and the Silindung. Tensions already existed in Pematang Siantar a decade before they grew strong in Medan. In 1916, Müller reported that there was an ongoing struggle in which both groups "formed parties that secretly tried to hurt each other." Because of these tensions, the mission failed in its efforts to start a (Christian) association for young men (allgemein Jünglingsverein). People from Toba launched their own reading club and a football club, without solid foundations, as it were. The new organisations replaced similar ones that had been intended for all Toba Batak. Some ten years later, these tensions were still causing troubles in the congregation near the railway station.

In 1919, Müller reported that, in places where people from Toba lived, there were cases in which gondang was played. Traditional Toba Batak music had been forbidden by the missionaries because they thought that this form of music could not be separated from its connections with traditional religion. Müller said that he

177 See Chapter 2, section "The formation of a Toba Batak ethno-religious identity".
178 Castles 1972, p. 196.
179 "... bilden Parteien die sich gegenseitig, wenn auch im Geheim, zu schaden suchen." Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1915/16. BM: 2.867. VEM.
180 Müller, Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1915, 20 January 1916. BM: 2.867. VEM.
181 Lotz, Kurzer Jahresbericht Pematang Siantar 1923. BM: 2.867. VEM.
had thought that this cultural expression had been forgotten, at least by the Toba Batak who lived around Pematang Siantar. He investigated the issue and found nothing that was “obviously heathen” (direkt heidnische Sachen). However, he found that the secrecy around the events meant that the playing of gondang was part of organising the Toba against the Silindung.\textsuperscript{182}

The role of gondang in this conflict is not surprising. In Silindung, gondang had been practically eradicated. In general, the Silindung regarded themselves as the most prominent and pure, if I dare say so, of Batak Christians. They were the first group of Batak who accepted Christianity in large numbers and had Nommensen, the person regarded as the apostle of the Batak, living among them. They regarded other groups as more primitive, because, owing to their later conversion to Christianity, they still continued to carry on more traditional practices, such as the playing of traditional music.

The Toba, on the other hand, considered themselves to be the original Batak, because the mythical ancestor of all Batak, Si Raja Batak, originated from a mountain near Lake Toba. To counter the Silindung argument that Nommensen was closer to them, the Toba proudly pointed out that Nommensen at the end of his life in fact moved his headquarters from Pearaja in Silindung to Sigumpar by the southern shore of Lake Toba and that he is was buried there. In relation to traditional practices, the Toba thought that, as the original Batak, they would not need to give up all good traditions just because they had become Christian. Gondang was still played in the Toba area and was a means for the Toba to project the image of themselves as the real Batak and to find something that would be offensive to people from Silindung.\textsuperscript{183}

The most likely explanation of these tensions is that the massive rural migration to the area around Pematang Siantar led to conflicts on how the available land should be distributed. These disputes were difficult, but, because migration meant that the people had been removed from the traditional social system in Tapanuli, it was much more difficult to find acceptable solutions for them. There existed simply no “given” structure in which a solution could be sought, no overall solidarity in society. The fact that rural migration had the effect that people from different areas of Tapanuli came into contact with one another for the first time could not have made things easier. Furthermore, the different groups did not live together. The report about gondang playing indicated that the Toba and the Silindung in a given area to a large extent formed separate settlements. Conflicts between a Toba and a Silindung would mean that the clans and communities were mobilised on a larger

\textsuperscript{182} Müller, Bericht Pematang Siantar 1919. BM: 2.867. VEM.

\textsuperscript{183} These two paragraphs are mainly based on conversations with Toba Batak from both these areas and I assume that similar attitudes existed at the time of the events analysed in this chapter.
scale than they would have been in a conflict between, for example, one Toba and another Toba. A conflict between persons from different subgroups would mean that their respective identities were reinforced and made the basis for action.

In Medan, the struggle for land was not relevant. It is therefore likely that the tensions in Medan represented a “spill-over” from Simalungun, in the sense that people in Simalungun tried to mobilise their clan-mates in Medan in support of their cause. There were, on the other hand, also internal causes of sub-ethnic tension. Because the Rev. Hutabarat was from Silindung, it seems that his transfer implied that the group most dissatisfied with the decision were people from the same area. They were then most inclined to oppose the missionaries when the RMG decided to station a missionary in the city.

The increasing size of the community also played a part. The steady influx of Toba Batak to Medan meant that the clan-groups became larger. As a consequence, an individual could to a larger extent rely on his or her own clan-mates and related clans for support. The Toba Batak population was reaching a “critical mass” in which there was a large potential for conflicts.

The cause of the sub-ethnic tensions can also be connected with the ethnic developments in Medan. The Toba were just becoming a recognisable minority in an environment that was becoming more multi-cultural. The fate of Batak Sport, which had been split twice in the 1920s, reveals that Medan had now become a place where more and more separate identities could be pursued. It implied that the Toba were not exposed to the same pressure to assimilate as they had been before. It was only when the external pressure decreased that internal conflicts could be thoroughly acted out. In this perspective, sub-ethnic tensions were a natural consequence when the Toba had become a rather large and secure, ethnic community.

In what way were the sub-ethnic tensions related to the other factors? Even though the element of sub-ethnic conflict appears to have increased during the course of the conflicts analysed in this chapter, it is likely that tensions between various sub-groups were to a large extent thought to be relevant in the Toba Batak community only. The conflicts could then be articulated on two levels, both on the level of opposition to the RMG and on the level of internal tensions. Both of these factors were important and in time they overlapped and reinforced each other to quite a large extent. One has to point out, however, that the result was not that all the people from one clan or clan-group critical of the RMG decided to actually join the new organisations. This step was, after all, perceived to be a drastic one. Many who were highly critical of the RMG preferred to remain within the organisation, working for more Toba Batak influence, instead of founding organisations outside this structure.
With regard to sub-ethnic tensions, it would be a mistake to assume that they did not remain a dimension within the Toba Batak community. On the other hand, they did not, after the conflicts in the 1920s, lead to more secessions from the congregation affiliated to the RMG. The conclusion is that in Medan both sub-ethnic tensions and widespread discontent with the RMG, underpinned by an indirect impact of the nationalist movement, had to exist in order for independent Churches to be formed.

**Concluding remarks**

As regards to the developments analysed in this chapter, it is apparent that the strategy of the RMG in Medan in the 1920s was to a large extent a failure with regard to its aim. This was to connect Medan more clearly with the central authority of the mission and strengthen the congregation, making Medan a mission station and building a church. In this way, the “dangers” and “temptations” of Medan would be countered and Toba ethno-religious identity maintained.

Instead of strengthening the congregation, the removal of a popular and independent minister, the RMG taking command in the process of building a church and the decision to station a missionary in Medan only caused resentment. These events clearly showed that the minister and the congregation had lost the relative freedom that they had been used to since the congregation was set up. This difficult situation was not helped by the fact that the missionary stationed in Medan from the start was unwilling to work there and handled the Toba without the combination of empathy and authority that might have made them respect him.

The Toba reaction to missionary paternalism was clearly connected with the agitation of Hatopan Kristen Batak, but also with the development of the nationalist movement in general. The rise of inclusive nationalism implied that it was much easier for Toba Christians to identify with the movement than if Islam or Communism was promoted as its main basis.

The result of the resentment against the RMG was that several groups decided to break with the mission. For the RMG, the events clearly demonstrated that to keep the Toba in Medan within the fold of the unified People’s Church would be problematic. As regarded the Toba Catholics, they joined a denomination that in principle was open to people from all ethnic groups. In this sense, they had broken with the tradition of the ethnic Church, and in Medan there were already European, Chinese and Indian Catholics. When the Toba converted, it was not apparent in what way they would organise themselves or how they would maintain their identity within the structure of the Catholic Church.
In contrast, the organisations founded outside the control of the western missionaries were an expression of Toba frustration that the RMG missionaries did not sufficiently implement the Three Selves formula. Even if they did break with the RMG, the tradition of the ethnic Church prevailed, because in practice they limited the membership to their ethnic group. In Medan, the development had begun whereby Toba ethno-religious identity was no longer connected with one Christian organisation, namely the RMG. Instead, that identity could find a number of expressions in various ethnic Churches. The development reveals that the Toba who had migrated from North Tapanuli, in this case the urban migrants in Medan, had to a certain extent come into their own. They had started to influence not only the social world of the Toba, but also the religious life. In a new way, they challenged the RMG to implement its ideals and showed a determination to move ahead towards the realisation of Church independence.

In relation to ethnic developments in Medan, the sub-ethnic dimension of the conflict was a result of the Toba experiencing less pressure to assimilate. Another aspect of this development was that the demise of the pan-Batak movement, including the split between Muslim and Christians who both accepted that they were Batak, again strengthened the connection between Toba religion and ethnic identity. To appeal to a pan-Batak identity was not feasible any more and the Toba were now identifiably a separate group of Toba Batak Christians among increasingly differentiated, Muslim, ethnic groups.
CHAPTER 5
A vibrant community between recession and Indonesian nationalism (1930-1942)

Introduction

The developments analysed in Chapter 4 implied that in denominational terms the Toba community in Medan was split up into different groups. This was a complex development in which distrust of the RMG, an indirect impact from the nationalist movement and local ethnic and sub-ethnic developments were involved. In this chapter the development of Toba ethno-religious identity from 1930 to 1942 will be discussed, the latter year marking the end of this period, when Japanese forces took over the Dutch colony.

The main analytical questions in this chapter are as follows: What social developments can be observed in the growing Toba community in Medan? In what way did the HKBP manage to consolidate its position in Medan after the splits in the 1920s? How did denominational pluralism develop and in what way were relations between ethnic identity and Christianity articulated? In what way did the Toba relate to the evolving nationalist movement, at the same time as they tried to steer a course in the increasingly diversified, ethnic landscape of Medan?

Social developments in the Toba Batak community

Economic recession and continuing social differentiation

After the first commercial plantations had been established, the general condition on the east coast had been one of steady growth. Financially, the combination of commercial, large-scale agriculture and co-operation between the Dutch authorities, the Malay sultans and the plantation companies had proved to be highly successful.

The financial recession in 1929-1930 led to the first, large-scale, economic crisis on the east coast. The steady growth of the economy was halted and many
planted workers were dismissed.\(^1\) Until the time of crisis the Toba community in Medan had grown at a steady pace and many had found good and profitable employment in the city. The recession implied that the Toba found themselves in a new and more difficult situation. According to the RMG missionary, Theis, the recession

... made many of our Christians unemployed ... Few of them returned to their home villages, however, because they had neither house nor land there ... Many of them became independent and started to sell food and flowers. Others founded a laundry, while others started to sell things on commission et cetera. The former minister W. Sinaga has, for instance, started a flower-shop with the beautiful name 'Ora et labora'.

A few years later, the missionary Müller painted a slightly more positive picture and began his annual report on Medan with the following statement:

In spite of the difficult economic conditions in the area of the east coast, we have with regard to the congregation only reasons to be grateful. Almost all members of the congregation could keep their positions, while the few who were dismissed, quickly found new ways to survive, thanks to their ability to adjust. Batak simply started businesses, for example, a Batak butchery that catered for the Europeans, a Batak bookbindery, a Batak employment bureau, office for transport and so forth. The arrival of mainly young men remained strong and the congregation increased its membership with several hundreds.\(^3\)

Theis wrote only two years after the recession had hit the east coast. The fact that a number of Toba were dismissed must have appeared to be something unparalleled. It was shocking not only to Theis but even more so to the Toba themselves. The region suddenly did not appear to be the Promised Land that it had been in the past. When Müller wrote a few years later, the fact that a number had been dismissed was no longer as shocking as it had been. Most of the Toba had in fact been able to retain their jobs.

\(^1\) Pelzer 1978, p. 52. Stoler 1985, pp. 43ff.

\(^2\) „... viele unserer Christen arbeitslos gemacht hat ... Nur wenige von denen, die arbeitslos geworden sind, kehrten in ihre Dörfer zurück, da sie ja auch dort weder Haus noch Land besitzen. Verschiedene haben sich hier in Medan selbständig gemacht, verkaufen Lebensmittel, Blumen, andere haben eine Wäscherei gegründet, noch andere belasten sich mit Commissionen usw. So hat sich auch der abgesetzte Pandita Willy einen Blumenhandel eingerichtet, der den schönen Namen 'Ora et Labora' trägt.“ Theis, Jahresbericht der Gemeinde Medan 1931-32, p. 2. BM: 2.852. VEM.

\(^3\) „Trotz der Ungunst der wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse auf dem ganzen Gebiet der Ostküste haben wir im Blick auf unsere Gemeinde nur Ursache zu danken. Unsere Gemeindeglieder konnten sich fast alle in ihren Stellungen halten und die wenigen, die entlassen wurden, konnten sich, bei der grossen Anpassungsfähigkeit, die unseren Bataks eigen ist, sehr schnell andere Unterhaltmöglichkeiten verschaffen. Es bildete sich geradezu ein Batakisches Unternehmertum heraus: Batakische Metzgerei, für Lieferungen an Europäer eingerichtet, Bat. Buchbinderei, Bat. Bureau für Arbeitsvermittlung, Kontor für Transportwesen und dergl. mehr. So blieb der Zuzug, besonders junger Leute, sehr stark und die Gemeinde breitete sich um mehrere hundert Glieder aus.“ Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 Missionsressortes Medan. BM: 2.852. VEM.
Those who were dismissed did generally not return home, “as they had neither house nor land there”. In the eyes of their relatives in Tapanuli, they had had prestigious positions with good salaries. In many cases, they very likely supported parents and relatives at home. To return to the home village would have implied a loss of prestige, both for themselves and for their relatives. In this situation, it was better to try to remain in the city rather than to face the shame of returning home.

It appears that the Toba were quite successful in finding new ways to make a living. The “employment bureau” that some started indicates that they were very active in finding new ways to support themselves. They established small businesses in the service sector, often catering for various needs of the European community. They had no tradition of small-scale manufacturing, like the Minangkabau. It was therefore easier for them to establish small, service-oriented businesses. One example was the flower-shop started by the former RMG minister Sinaga. They tried to cater for Europeans, because they could thereby make a larger profit than they would otherwise. They had previous experience of interacting with Europeans and contacts in the European community that they would try to exploit. Their ability to speak Dutch facilitated communication.

To the group of independent Toba businessmen one can add a number of cloth salesmen who established themselves in the city. Most of them had worked in the same business sector in Tapanuli. In 1938, this group of Toba entrepreneurs were large enough to establish a voluntary association of their own. One of them was E. Simanjuntak, who in 1937 founded the E. Simanjuntak Bataksche Handels Maatschappij (E. Simanjuntak Batak Trading Company) on Moskeestraat (now Jalan Mesjid) in Medan. Though the salesmen established offices in Medan, production remained in Tapanuli. It was not until after 1950 that large-scale production moved to Medan.

The second quotation above shows that, in spite of the recession and the number of Toba who were dismissed, the city continued to attract young men who sought to improve their situation. The continuous influx of Toba migrants to Medan is confirmed in the statistics available. The growth in the number of migrants, combined with the fact that the available positions in the offices in Medan did not grow at the same pace, necessarily meant that the number of Toba men who did not have enough qualifications to work as office clerks increased. In

---

4 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, January 1938, Mailr. no. 239 geh. /38, p. 7. ARA.
5 The original sign is still visible above the shop.
6 Interview with the son of E. Simanjuntak, A. Simanjuntak.
7 In 1926, the congregation in Medan numbered 1018 members and in 1934, when Medan was again numbered by itself, the number was 1435. Tampubolon 1937, p. 75.
late 1930s, there were Toba men living in Medan who were said to be unemployed.\(^8\) To be able to live in the city, they may have taken temporary jobs or were supported by relatives who had work. In the 1930s, there were also Toba in Medan who had been detained for criminal activities.\(^9\)

Even though the occupations of the Toba during the 1930s became more diversified, the core of the community was still the families of the office workers. A substantial part of this group had lived for one or two decades in Medan and had adapted comfortably to life in the city. Until the 1930s, the Toba generally lived as tenants, but in the 1930s some built their own houses. The main area where houses were erected was a part of the present Medan Baru area, west of Polonia around Daratweg (now Jalan Srivijaya). At the time, the area was situated on the edge of the city near rice-fields cultivated by Javanese and Malay farmers. The Toba bought land and built simple houses, gradually enlarged and improved.\(^10\)

Apart from houses, these families acquired material items that signified their status and cultural values. The first seems to have been the radio, with which they could hear both local news and broadcasts from Java. In addition to newspapers, the radio had the effect that they were informed about political and economic life, both of the region and of the archipelago as a whole. Some Toba bought their own cars, although this was a rare occurrence.\(^11\) In 1933, a missionary reported that, when Toba went to church, the women and children arrived in horse-drawn carts or taxis, while the men rode bicycles.\(^12\)

The self-image of the community is made clear from a quotation from A. Hamacher, a RMG woman missionary, who in the mid-1930s arrived from Germany to work in Medan:

The first visit to the Batak church in Medan showed me that the concern now was to readjust myself. You are not, as in the homeland, 'the mother' or 'the father' that all people joyfully come to meet, but you are just a 'churchgoer' among many. When I visited the Batak church council and the elders, I came to the home of a retired civil servant. I was approached in a friendly manner and he asked me if I spoke Dutch. I affirmed this and then he said, 'Everyone in our home speaks Dutch and my daughters speak English, French and German'. Here one sees no dirt on clothes as in the

---

\(^8\) The board of the voluntary association Pardomean Dos ni Roha, for instance, is said to have included only unemployed Toba. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, April 1938, Mailt. no. 563 geh/38, p. 14. ARA.

\(^9\) For an example of Justin Siombing's contacts with a convicted murderer, see Sianipar 1978, pp. 69f.

\(^10\) Interview, Nyonya Rosina Tampubolon boru Hutagaol (b. 1909). In 1994, she was still living in the house that they built on Jalan Srivijaya.

\(^11\) A Toba woman who lived in the town of Pangkalan Susu (north of Medan) told me that they had purchased a car which they unfortunately had to leave behind when they left for Tapanuli during the Indonesian revolution.

\(^12\) Müller, Bericht Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
inland. One can only observe well-dressed people and one sometimes thinks that Europeans are dressed more simply than our Batak gentlemen here when they go to Church.\footnote{13}

Toba men, at least in relation to a woman missionary, evidently regarded themselves as being on an equal social level. Her knowledge of the Dutch language, questioned by a prominent member of the congregation, was obviously a test to see if she fulfilled the basic requirement for fitting in among the well-educated Toba. The statement that the daughters of the family knew European languages was intended to show that the Toba in Medan were on the same social level as the Europeans. Their spotless appearance when going to church carried the same connotations. Ms. Hamacher, who, before being convalescent in Germany, had worked in Tapanuli, was comparing with her own previous experiences in Tapanuli when she thought that the congregation in Medan was so special that she had to readjust. The Toba certainly knew and accepted that a woman missionary had not the same status as her male colleagues and that she did not have formal authority over the congregation. Even so, male missionaries, whom the Toba would show more respect, would have similar experiences in relating to the Toba community in Medan.

The emerging Toba Batak women’s movement

During the first phase of Toba migration to Medan, women migrated to the city primarily to become the wives of Toba office-workers. In the 1930s, a new element was introduced into the social world of the Toba, namely women who did not immediately become urban housewives, as had been the case in the past. A small number of women migrated to Medan to pursue studies or to find employment in the health sector.

These women took advantage of the expanding educational opportunities for women provided by the RMG and the stronger encouragement within the community for women to obtain education. In Medan, women were able to study

nursing and midwifery or at standard schools for women, HIS and MULO.\textsuperscript{14} As an example, there were in 1936 16 Toba girls who were studying to become nurses and midwives at the Municipal Hospital.\textsuperscript{15}

Even though women in the 1930s had greater opportunities than before to acquire education, van Bemmelen has shown that in the Toba community the primary aim of educating women was not so that they might support their families. The emphasis was instead on the fact that education would make them suitable wives for educated male Toba. In the Toba community at the time, there were fears that migration would mean an increasing number of men marrying women of other ethnic groups and thus being lost to the community. Men were important because without them the clan would not be able to survive. There were reports from Java saying that Toba men had come to prefer the “sophisticated” Javanese women, whom they thought were more refined than the uneducated women at home. To remedy the “danger”, women from wealthy clans were able to obtain education in order to become suitable wives for the men, who otherwise might be tempted to marry women from other ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{16}

There are nevertheless instances of women in Medan who continued to work, even after marrying and raising a family. A woman who was educated at the Municipal Hospital in the 1930s, nyonya Hutabarat boru Pasaribu, claimed that it was very unusual for a woman to work outside her home. But, because she was a midwife she continued to work, attending to patients at home. She did also paid and voluntary work connected with the Catholic St Elisabeth Hospital.\textsuperscript{17} The assumption seems to have been that such activities were “proper” for women to pursue. Furthermore, as a midwife, she would play an important role in the Toba community. Even though she was a pioneer among the Toba women, her example was not followed by many. It appears that generally women remained housewives.

There are small signs that Toba women in Medan in the 1930s improved their status and self-esteem. Increasingly, they took independent initiatives in the community. While the children were small, it was self-evident that women would remain at home to care for them. But in the 1930s, the children had become older, which had the effect that women were not as bound to their homes as previously. It is also possible that they could now afford to let a young, poor relative from Tapanuli or a girl from another ethnic group work in their homes and take care of the children.

A special concern of Toba women in the 1930s was polygamy. Despite the opposition of the RMG missionaries, it remained a rather common custom in

\textsuperscript{14} Arizonang 1994, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{15} A. Hamacher, In der Grossstadt Medan. Des Meisters Ruf, March 1936.
\textsuperscript{16} Bemmelen 1992.
\textsuperscript{17} Interview, nyonya Hutabarat boru Pasaribu (b. 1912).
Tapanuli. In August 1934, the Toba in Medan, presumably most of them women, held two meetings at which polygamy was unanimously condemned as contradictory to both humanity in general and Christianity in particular. The issue of polygamy had been widely discussed after a group of chiefs had stated that they did not see any contradiction between polygamy and “the (Christian) Batak adat” (de Christen) Batakasche adat).

These efforts were part of a larger movement in Toba society. In the following year, 3000 women gathered in Tarutung to oppose a group of adat experts who had propagated for polygamy. The main speaker on that occasion stated that it was actually not according to adat that a man should have two wives, since those who have only one wife act according to adat. As a response to this meeting, Toba women in Medan formed a committee that aimed to defend the interests of women in adat questions. It sought contacts with a similar committee in Tapanuli.

In 1936, women in Medan founded Parsadaan Ina Kristen Batak (the Association of Christian Batak Women). They opposed polygamy, a move that united women to act as an interest group. The name of the organisation indicates that it was ecumenical. Two years later, an organisation for Toba women connected with the Church in Tapanuli was set up, Punguan Ina-Ina HKBP (the HKBP Women’s Association). The relation between the two organisations is unknown, but it is likely that the majority of women joined the second one.

These activities show that the women were indeed deeply involved in an issue related to the rights of women in their own culture. Even though the Toba in Medan faithfully adhered to adat, a critical attitude emerged among women as to how adat was practised. It was an effect of their being removed from the community at home in geographical and social terms. Women who struggled for their rights had now become an element of the Toba urban elite in Medan.

---

18 See Chapter 2, section “Einzelbekehrung and Volkschristianizierung in the RMG mission on Sumatra”.
19 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 1137 geh / 34, p. 5. ARA.
21 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, February 1936, Mailr. no. 315 geh/ 36, p. 12. ARA.
22 Sejarah Sudirman 1987, p. 80
23 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 1506 geh/ 38, p. 13. ARA.
The consolidation of the HKBP in Medan

Remaining missionary authority in the HKBP, financial setbacks and a new initiative

After the RMG decided to formally institute the autonomous HKBP in 1930, the missionaries were still able to retain their dominance over the new structure. The effect was that the Toba continued to raise demands for more influence, and many suspected the honesty of the RMG. Many of the Toba clergy wanted to do away with the notion that they were simply assistants to the missionaries and requested that they should themselves be made responsible for a group of congregations. These demands were supported, for instance, by Müller, the former missionary in Pematang Siantar. He argued that Toba co-workers, teachers, clergy and elders were already doing the main work of the Church. Therefore, the goal of an autonomous Church could be achieved only if the missionaries voluntarily stepped back and gave the Toba clergy clear responsibilities in relation to a group of congregations.

In 1930, the missionary and missiologist, Hendrik Kraemer, visited North Sumatra on the invitation of Ephorus Warneck. Before his visit, there was a rumour in the indigenous press that he, as a well-known missionary, was a representative of the government and was intended to mediate between the RMG and the Toba opposition. Directly upon his arrival, he was approached by representatives of Partai 123. To them, he emphasised that he was not a government representative but had been invited by Ephorus Warneck. He appears not to have been impressed by the group and the same applies to his meeting with leaders of Hatopan Kristen Batak.

In the report of his visit that was published posthumously, Kraemer congratulated the RMG on its previous endeavours. But with regard to their handling of the present situation, he thought that the missionaries would have to change their attitude to the Toba. Kraemer criticised the missionaries, among other things, for not listening sympathetically and emphatically to the harsh and often seemingly unjust criticism of the Toba. It is highly likely that Kraemer's perspective was influenced by his meetings with Partai 123 and Hatopan Kristen Batak. With

24 See Chapter 2, section “The founding of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in 1930”.
27 Kraemer, Bataklanden van Februari-April 1930. BM: 2.956. VEM. For Kraemer’s activities as a missionary and missiologist, see Hallencreutz 1966.
28 Kraemer 1958, pp. 64f.
regard to the new Church constitution accepted in 1929, Kraemer thought that it was an important step, but that it was crucial that the Toba should feel that the new structure was not mainly a tool of the missionaries. He thought that the Toba should gradually begin to have financial responsibilities and supported the proposals to give the Toba clergy independent responsibility. 29

In 1932, Warneck left Sumatra and became Director of the RMG in Germany. When he had taken up his new position, he was obviously influenced by the sentiments shown by his Toba co-workers, Müller and Kraemer. He reached the conclusion that the progress towards an actual Batak take-over of authority from the missionaries within the HKBP had to be speeded up. In line with this new-won conviction, he strongly advised the missionaries on Sumatra to give much more responsibility to the Batak Christians, both on the local and on the central level. Despite his authority, he only partly managed to persuade his fellow missionaries on Sumatra to implement the policy. 30

In terms of formal changes of the HKBP structure, no changes occurred until 1939. In that year, the Synod met the earlier demands and decided that Toba ministers would be responsible for a parish consisting of 5-15 congregations, an area that was considered rather small at the time. Furthermore, Toba clergy would also take part in the election of the Praeses, and the Executive Committee of the Synod would nominate to the RMG in Germany candidates for the post of Ephorus. Suggestions to loosen missionary control over financial matters were, however, not implemented. 31 In 1940, the political developments in Europe had an important impact on the development of the HKBP, but they will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the 1930s, the RMG suffered from financial problems. The recession of 1929-30 meant that the RMG central organisation in Germany had to reduce its budget. On Sumatra, the consequence was that the number of European personnel was reduced, from 68 in 1929 to 50 in 1930. 32 During the following years, the number of European personnel increased gradually. But, in 1934, the mission, because of the financial crisis in Germany, once more cut down the number of European workers, from 67 in 1934 to 58 in the following year. 33 The plans to station a missionary in the Angkola area of South Tapanuli were abandoned and each district had to do without one or two missionaries. 34 All in all, the number of

29 Kraemer 1958, pp. 63, 71.
31 Nyhus 1987, p. 61.
32 For these statistics, see the table in Aritonang 1994, p. 302.
34 Protokoll Sitzung des Moderamens am 25. November 1935 in Sigumpar. BM: 2.890. VEM.
European ministers was reduced by five and the numbers of other European workers suffered similar cuts.\textsuperscript{35}

In spite of the cuts in the number of European personnel in 1934, the RMG at the same time actually took an initiative to expand its activities into a new territory in North Tapanuli. This was the area of the Dairi/Pakpak Batak northwest of Lake Toba. In missionary correspondence, it is often called Simsim. The region had been colonised in 1904, when Dutch troops entered it in a search for the Singamangaraja. Soon Toba traders and settlers arrived, who also brought their faith. In 1911, the first baptisms took place and the RMG initiated a school for village headmen.\textsuperscript{36} But the number of converts remained low and the local population, by and large, continued to adhere to traditional religion.\textsuperscript{37}

In 1926, Warneck highlighted the prospects of expanding the activities in the area as follows: "Besides all the progress in cultural and Church matters the Batak mission also has areas where real pioneer-work is pursued, with all its burdens and fascination. There is the remote Sidikalang ... Here real paganism still rules."\textsuperscript{38}

It is evident that the assumption in this quotation was a contrast between, on the one hand, the steady work in the areas of Tapanuli where the majority of the population had become Christian and, on the other hand, the prospects of pioneer work in more remote areas. This implied a difficult and exciting encounter with "real heathens". The Pakpak people were regarded as one of the Batak subgroups and therefore the united Batak People's Church would necessarily include them.\textsuperscript{39}

In 1935, the Missionary Conference supported a plan initiated by the leadership in Barmen to station a missionary in the Pakpak area.\textsuperscript{40} The mission decided that one missionary would be stationed in Sidikalang from the beginning of January 1936.\textsuperscript{41} The decision was not implemented immediately, probably because the missionary who was to be placed there could not arrive as soon as expected. In 1936, the conference repeated that it "unanimously supported the suggestion of

\textsuperscript{35} See the table in Aritonang 1994, p. 302. I do not know how the issue of the decrease in personnel was handled by the RMG. Some missionaries might have been pensioned, some might have been sacked. Information on these matters can certainly be found in the RMG archives in Barmen.
\textsuperscript{36} Eben Ezer 1986, pp. 30f.
\textsuperscript{37} Aritonang 1994, pp. 159f.
\textsuperscript{38} "Bei allen Fortschritten kultureller und kirchlicher Art hat die Batakmission noch Gebiete, wo echte Pionierarbeit mit allen ihren Lasten und Reizen getrieben wird. Da ist das abgelegene Sidikalang ... Dort herrscht noch echtes Heidentum." Warneck, Generalbericht über die Batakmission 1925-26. BM: 2.908. VEM.
\textsuperscript{39} For the last point, see Aritonang 1994, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{40} Protokoll Jahreskonferenz, 25 June-1 July 1935. BM: 2.890. VEM.
\textsuperscript{41} Protokoll Sitzung des Moderamens am 25. November 1935 in Sigumpar. BM: 2.890. VEM.
the Home Board regarding the appointment to Simsim ...”42. The mission prepared to station another missionary in the town of Sidikalang. At the time, a Toba minister was already working there and the new missionary would take over his house.43

When Warneck became director of the RMG in Germany, he obviously wanted to fulfil his old dream of starting “real” mission work in the Pakpak area and station a missionary there. The financial problems of the mission did not make him change his mind. He instructed the missionaries on Sumatra to take care of the practical considerations as to how to decrease expenses in other working areas.44 His new-won authority and knowledge of the conditions on Sumatra had the effect that he had little or no fear that the missionaries on Sumatra would oppose his suggestion openly. Furthermore, it appears that, when he had become Director of the RMG, Warneck was more keen and able to exercise power over the missionaries on Sumatra than his predecessors. The decisions of missionary conferences, for instance, are now more often formulated as suggestions to the Home Board, not as valid decisions in themselves. Since he had been Ephorus of the mission on Sumatra, he certainly had the legitimacy that comes from “knowing the field”.

It makes sense to see Warneck’s action in terms of his missiological convictions. When he had become Director of the RMG, he wanted to stress clearly that the conversion of traditional religionists had to remain an integral part of the work of the mission. He regarded it as a danger that missionaries on Sumatra would be content with the status quo. To put it more sharply, “the conversion of the heathen” was the real raison d’être of missionary work. In the case of the mission on Sumatra, he thought that the RMG, in spite of the difficult financial situation, should be able to show that they were pursuing pioneering mission work in at least one area, an area that Warneck himself had long had his eyes on. Efforts to reach the whole Batak people had to be pursued relentlessly.

42 „Die Konferenz stimmt einmütig dem Wunsch der verehrten Heimatleitung zu in Frage der Besetzung Simsim ...”.

43 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz, 21-27 July 1936. BM: 2.890. VEM.

44 I have not found any hints that the RMG received additional funds directed specifically to the mission in Pakpak, which would have explained Warneck’s action in financial terms. If the mission to Pakpak was financed outside the general budget of the RMG, it would not have been involved in the discussions on the priorities of the mission. This was, for instance, the case with two RMG missionaries who worked on the island of Samosir. They were financed by a group of Protestant congregations in the Netherlands. Warneck to Inspektor, Pearaja 11 April 1930. BM: 2.910. VEM.
General developments in Medan and the closing down of the mission station

During the 1930s, the activities of the HKBP increased in Medan and on the east coast generally. As a reflection of the general growth of the community, the congregation in Medan increased its membership from 1018 in 1926 to 1944 in 1936, an increase of almost 100%. After the completion of the church building, it was filled on Sundays and plans to build a new church in another part of the city were discussed. But the plans did not materialise. Instead, the congregation in 1935 started to hold services also in the small church for Javanese Christians that the Gereformeerde congregation had recently built. In order to increase the number of services, districts were formed where evening prayers and special services for women were held. Many women did not attend Sunday service because they had small children. The assumption was that small children were not allowed in church in the course of the regular service and that it was better for mothers to remain at home with them. Services were initially led by Marie Theis, the wife of the missionary Theis. Later the work was taken over by the missionary Müller’s daughter, Elisabeth Müller.

Medan remained the seat of a missionary and a Toba minister and the centre of the work on the east coast. In the region, services in 1932 were held regularly in 25 places. These included Arnhemia (the present Pancur Batu), Labuan Batu, Lubukpakam, Perbaungan and the harbour of Belawan. In these towns, Toba congregations often gathered in schools or other public buildings. For some Toba, it was still quite difficult and expensive to travel to attend worship. Even so it was estimated that about 60% of HKBP members attended services regularly.

With regard to the missionary presence in Medan, Theis had repeatedly asked Warneck to allow him to leave Medan. Ever since he had arrived in Medan, he

45 Tampubolon 1937, p. 73. These statistics do not include the Toba who lived in the region outside Medan.
46 Müller, Jahresbericht Missionsressortes Medan 1934. BM: 2.852. VEM.
47 Tampubolon 1937, pp. 63f.
48 Müller, Jahresbericht Missionsressortes Medan 1934. BM: 2.852. VEM.
49 Theis, Jahresbericht Medan 1931-32. BM: 2.852. VEM. Her first name is taken from her obituary in In Die Welt für Die Welt, 11 November 1966, p. 212.
50 Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1932. BM 2.852. VEM. Sejarah Sudirman 1987, p. 80.
51 Theis, Jahresbericht Medan 1931-32. BM: 2.852. VEM.
52 Eben Ezer 1936, p. 29.
53 Theis, Jahresbericht Medan 1931-32. BM: 2.852. VEM. The RMG missionary here naturally refers to the Toba who were members of the HKBP. Toba from other denominations might also have taken part in these services, as it was more difficult for them to attend the services of other denominations.
54 Warneck to Direktor, 28 March 1929. BM: 2.910. VEM.
had had difficulties in gaining the respect of the Toba community. It was therefore natural that he should prefer to be transferred to one of the rural congregations. In 1932, Müller, whom Warneck thought would master the situation, replaced him. The new missionary in Medan had for years had many contacts with the congregation. His position with regard to the development of the HKBP probably also made Warneck think that he was the right person to handle the specific situation in the city.

Despite the general expansion of the work and the stationing of a new missionary in Medan in 1932, the Medan mission station was abolished two years later. The main reason for this development was the unstable financial situation of the RMG. At the time of the crisis in 1929-30, the conflicts analysed in the previous chapter were still in being. The missionary very likely remained in Medan because it was thought that a missionary presence was needed to keep opposing Toba at bay. However, as a result of the financial crisis in 1934, Medan was the first mission station to be affected. In that year the missionary conference stated that "In this difficult time the conference has strong doubts about continuing to have a missionary stationed in Medan. It therefore suggests that the Medan station for the time being be abolished and the house (of the missionary) be sold." The central board of the RMG in Germany supported the plan, although reluctantly, they said.

Medan was an expensive station, certainly by far the most expensive of all the mission stations of the RMG on Sumatra. The high costs in Medan had in fact been controversial even when the decision was made to station a missionary there. Shutting the station down was financially the best choice when the mission had to cut its spending.

An additional reason why the RMG in 1934 thought that it was possible to remove the missionary from Medan was that the situation in the city had by the mid-1930s calmed down after the tumultuous period of the late 1920s. There were no longer many conflicts within the HKBP congregation and members who had been prone to leave the congregation had left. Some who had left in the heat of the moment even returned under the RMG umbrella. The details of these developments will be discussed later in this chapter.

56 "In dieser Notzeit hat die Konferenz grosse Bedenken, Medan noch weiter mit einem europäischen Missionar besetzt zu halten. Es wird darum vorgeschlagen, den Posten Medan vorläufig aufzugeben und das Haus dort zu vermieten." Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 26 June to 1 July 1934. BM: 2.890. VEM.
57 Deputation RMG, Antwortschreiben auf das Protokoll der Konferenz Rheinischer Missionare in Sumatra, 26 June to 3 July 1934. BM: 2.890. VEM.
Furthermore, in relation to the new initiative in the Pakpak area, the situation in Medan did not justify special efforts. In comparison, the RMG activities in Medan did not represent pioneer work. The Toba in Medan were already Christians, many in fact second- or third-generation Christians. The earlier fears of the missionaries that those who migrated to the east coast would lose their faith were also in general not confirmed.

How then did the missionary and the congregation in Medan react to this decision? The way in which Missionary Müller ended his last report from Medan is a case in point:

I cannot end this annual report without referring to what our congregation here is deeply concerned about, the expected transfer of their missionary to Balige. The whole congregation has supported the strong protest of the church council. ... The main feeling here is that the removal of their missionary is premature and that the congregation, that a few years ago went through such difficult conflicts and just recently has settled down, cannot manage without a missionary. ... The repeatedly expressed feeling that the congregation will go through more trials seems only justified to me. We can hardly console ourselves and say that the removal of the missionary is only a temporary solution and that within a shorter or longer time Medan will be reoccupied.

This quotation makes it reasonable to assume that at least a majority of the congregation was against the plans to move the missionary from Medan. They even submitted a formal protest to Landgrebe, Warneck's successor. Müller supported their arguments and made himself a spokesperson for the congregation. The fact that he voiced such criticism in his annual report, and not only in private correspondence, is also an indication that he felt strongly about the issue.

The main argument put forward was that, without the presence of a missionary, the congregation would again be drawn into conflicts. In view of the recent events, it is not surprising that this kind of feelings should have existed in 1934 among those who remained loyal to the RMG. Even though the situation had calmed down, future conflicts were not impossible. In that situation, they trusted Müller and his ability to deal with conflicts that might arise. At that time, those who had a high regard for themselves and their own importance thought

58 "Ich kann diesen Jahresbericht nicht beenden, ohne auf das einzugehen, was unsere Gemeinde heute am tiefsten bewegt. Der bevorstehende Umzug ihres Missionars nach Balige. Dem starken Protest des Kirchenrates hat sich wohl die ganze Gemeinde angeschlossen. ... Der Gedanke herrscht vor, dass die Wegnahme des Missionars verfrüht ist, dass die Gemeinde, die erst vor wenigen Jahren so schwere Erschütterungen erlebt hat und eben erst zur Ruhe gekommen ist, des Europ. Missionars noch nicht entbehren kann, ... Der immer wieder ausgesprochene Gedanke, dass der Gemeinde neue schwere Prüfungen bevorstehen, scheint mir nur zu berechtigt zu sein. Wir können uns auch kaum damit trösten, wenn wir sagen, dass die Wegnahme des Missionars nur ein Interim bedeutet soll, dass über kürzere oder längere Zeit Medan wieder besetzt werden soll." Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 des Missionsressortes Medan. BM: 2.852. VEM.

59 I have not been able to find any document of this kind in the RMG archives.
that they deserved European leadership. Another line of reasoning that Müller supported was that the expanding congregation needed more personnel. This did not per se imply that the personnel in the growing congregation had to be missionaries, but, because Müller argued partly in his own interests, he took this for granted. In the end, these efforts were in vain, and on 17 February 1935, Müller held his last service in Medan before he was transferred to Balige. This meant that his daughter, who had managed the work among women, also left.

The Rev. Justin Sihombing and the birth of the first autonomous Toba Batak congregation

Because of the transfer of Müller, Justin Sihombing became the only clergyman working in Medan. One would have expected that, in line with the position of previous Toba ministers, he would be placed under the authority of the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar. This solution was, however, not proposed. The document of the Home Board that dealt with the closing-down of the mission station in Medan stated that “Medan furthermore provides proof that a Batak congregation can stand on its own feet, even without European leadership. Rev. Justin is hopefully mature enough for the task.”

In the same vein, Warneck, during a return visit to Sumatra, in a letter to Müller with reference to the congregation in Medan, wrote that “... we must get used to (the idea) that individual congregations now really become independent and that we accordingly will move the whole responsibility to their leaders.”

Even if these statements did not support the actual creation of a Church led by the Toba themselves, they implied that on the level of individual congregations missionary authority could be lifted. Medan would become an independent congregation within the HKBP structure, led by a Toba minister. He would be directly under the authority of the Ephorus, not of the missionary living closest to the city, i.e. the one stationed in Pematang Siantar. Warneck expected that the

---

60 Müller to Warneck, Medan 30 January 1935. BM: 2.852. VEM.
61 Müller to Warneck, Medan 30 January 1935. BM: 2.890. VEM. Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 des Missionsressortes Medan. BM: 2.890. VEM.
62 „Medan liefert übrigens den Beweis, dass eine batakische Gemeinde ganz auf eigenen Füssen stehen kann, auch ohne europäische Oberleitung. Hoffentlich ist Pandita Justin der Aufgabe gewachsen.” Antwortschreiben auf das Protokoll der Konferenz Rheinischer Missionars in Sumatra, 26 June-3 July 1934. BM: 2.890. VEM. In the minutes of the annual conference in 1934, I have not found any statements about the position of the Toba minister in Medan.
63 „Im übrigen müssen wir uns ja daran gewöhnen, dass einzelne Gemeinden nun im Ernst selbständig werden und dementsprechend ihren Leitern auch die volle Verantwortung zuschreiben.” Warneck to Müller, Balige 8 January 1935. BM: 1.992. VEM.
experiment in Medan in the near future would become a model for the future development of the Batak Church.\textsuperscript{64} It appears that he launched Medan as an experiment in line with the demand that the Toba clergy should be given independent responsibility.

Apart from the fundamental nature of the statement, it was also a way of convincing Müller that the closing-down of the mission station was not only an event conditioned by harsh, financial realities. It could, in fact, also be seen to be in line with the missionary ideals that Müller had made himself a spokes-person for. The necessary change could in fact be justified beautifully with reference to the missionary ideal of Church autonomy.

Despite the insistence that Medan was in fact an autonomous congregation, Warneck was not fully convinced that Sihombing could manage the congregation by himself. To Müller, he wrote: “Hopefully the congregation in Medan is doing fine in its independence. There are, however, also elements that cause problems. A certain supervision from (Pematang) Siantar would probably not be out of place.”\textsuperscript{65} The statement that there were “troublemakers” in Medan was essentially the same as the one made in connection with the decision in 1928 to station a missionary in Medan. But now the group was not perceived as being strong enough to justify the presence of a missionary. In Warneck’s views, the situation would justify only some kind of surveillance from Pematang Siantar.

It is quite certain that the supervision from Pematang Siantar did not become a reality. There are no hints that the missionary there after 1934 ever got involved in the affairs of the Medan congregation. Sihombing was the first Toba minister to be given such a responsibility.\textsuperscript{66} The first minister in Medan, Josia Hutabarat, had certainly worked independently, but he never had the formal authority that Sihombing had now been given. It was only in 1939 that similar arrangements were made possible in other congregations.

In administrative terms, the change implied that Medan was placed outside the regular RMG structure, in which it had belonged to the Simalungun/East Coast...

\textsuperscript{64} In the RMG Annual Report, aimed at the home supporters in Germany, it is simply stated that the congregation in Medan was managed by the Toba minister himself. \textit{Jahresbericht Die Rheinische Mission} 1934-35, p. 55. The principal issue involved is not referred to and it may be that it was not thought proper to be introduced to supporters at home. Cf. Tampubolon 1937, p. 63, who makes the general point of the autonomy of Sihombing in relation to other missionaries.

\textsuperscript{65} „Hoffentlich hält sich nun die Gemeinde Medan in ihrer Selbständigkeit gut. Es sind ja wohl auch Elemente, die Schwierigkeiten machen. Eine gewisse Obenaufsucht von Sintar aus wird wohl nicht zu vermeiden sein.” Warneck to Müller, Balige 8 January 1935. BM: 1.992. VEM.

\textsuperscript{66} Cf. Nyhus 1987, pp. 154f.
District, led by a missionary with the title of Praeses. In 1932, the district came to include also the Aceh and Dairi/Pakpak regions. In that year, the district was renamed the District of Sumatra's East Coast, Aceh and Dairi. The working area of J. Sihombing, as minister in Medan, remained the east coast of Sumatra as a whole.

In spite of the new position of the Toba minister, the RMG continued to station personnel in Medan, this time in the form of a woman missionary, Str. Alwine Harnacher. She had previously worked on Sumatra but had been a convalescent in Germany for a few years. She arrived in Medan in November 1935. Her duties were to take care of women and girls and to manage the guest-house.

The guest-house came into being when Theis was stationed in Medan, to serve the European, mainly German, visitors and missionaries who needed to use the city as a thoroughfare to other parts of Sumatra. To this end, the house of the missionary near the church in the European quarters was used. When Müller was transferred from Medan, the mission decided to station a woman missionary in Medan to take over the task.

Normally, women missionaries of the RMG were placed under the authority of a local male missionary. But, in this case, the situation was different, since it was not a missionary but a Toba minister who exercised authority over Medan. The idea that an indigenous minister would be superior to a woman missionary was most likely regarded as inappropriate by the missionaries and, maybe, also by Sihombing himself. Before Harnacher left Germany, Warneck had therefore assured her that, even if she worked alone, she could count on some help from the missionary in Pematang Siantar, in spite of the fact that he no longer had authority over Medan.

Hamacher's original duty was to devote herself to the work among Toba girls and women. Initially, she did so. Soon, the work of the guest-house took more and more of her time and she had to give up direct work in the congregation.

A contributing factor to this development was that the guest-house was situated

---

67 For the development of this district, see Nyhus 1987, p. 75. In 1911, the district was called the Simalungun District, but obviously as an effect of the increasing importance of the community on the east coast, it was often called the Simalungun-East Coast District.


70 Warneck to Hamacher, 2 September 1935. BM 2.105. VEM.

71 Theis, Jahresbericht Medan 1931-32. BM: 2.852. VEM.

72 Warneck to Müller, Balige 8 January 1935. Protokoll Jahreskonferenz 1935. BM 2.890. VEM.

73 Warneck to Hamacher, 2 September 1935. BM 2.105. VEM.

in the Dutch part of the town. The situation meant that she had a structural problem in establishing and maintaining intimate contacts with the members of the congregation while she was bound by her work at the guest-house. Most of her personal contacts appear to have been with other European residents in Medan and the mainly German visitors to the guest-house.

Hamacher and Sihombing seem to have established a good relationship. For instance, Sihombing is said to have come to visit her regularly. She had a high regard for his qualities as a minister and described him as "... a simple loving person who really gives something in his sermons ...". They remained in personal contact at least until the end of the Indonesian revolution in the late 1940s, when Ms. Hamacher was living in Germany. The relationship was favoured by the fact that they had clearly separate duties and that neither of them had authority over the other. Sihombing obviously did not think that the presence of a woman missionary encroached on his own authority.

In 1938 the work at the guest-house came to an end when the Annual Conference decided to close it down. Ms. Hamacher was transferred to the mission hospital in Balige, and in 1940 she returned to Germany because of poor health. Even though the presence of the woman missionary in Medan lasted only a few years, it still illustrates that European missionaries were now prepared to work in a congregation that was led by indigenous clergy and that in such a situation lasting bonds of friendship could be forged.

75 The location of the guest-house in relation to the places where Toba lived is also pointed out by Hamacher. *Hamacher, In der Grossstadt Medan. Des Meisters Ruf*, March 1936. She also said that it was not natural for them to visit her. Hospizarbeit in der Küstenstadt Medan, aus einem Reisebericht von Schwester Allwine Hamacher. *Des Meister Ruf*, March 1938. The reason was probably the location of the church.

76 See Hospizarbeit in der Küstenstadt Medan, aus einem Reisebericht von Schwester Allwine Hamacher. *Des Meisters Ruf*, March 1938, pp. 40ff. Because of her decreasing contacts with the Toba congregation, it is not surprising that she is not mentioned in Tampubolon's history of the congregation, Tampubolon 1937, or in the section of the history of the HKBP congregation on Jalan Sudirman that is devoted exclusively to work among women, *Sejarah Sudirman* 1987, pp. 80f.


79 See, for instance, the letter Sihombing to Hamacher, Pearaja 1 December 1949. BM: 2.105. VEM.

80 Hamacher, for instance, pointed out to supporters at home that "the congregation is the first independent congregation in our large Batak Church." ("Es ist die erste selbständige Gemeinde unserer grossen Batak kirche."). Hamacher, *In der Grossstadt Medan, Des Meisters Ruf*, March 1936.

81 Protokoll Jahreskonferenz, 5-10 July 1938. BM: 2.890. VEM. I have not seen any justification for this decision, but it is possible that the flow of missionaries was in the end not sufficient to make the work of the guest-house profitable.

82 Curriculum vitae A. Hamacher. BM: 2.105. VEM.
Relations with the independent Churches and continuous opposition to missionary authority

After the tumultuous years of the late 1920s, when two secessions from the HKBP congregation led to the formation of independent Churches, the situation by the early 1930s had calmed down. There were no longer many conflicts within the HKBP congregation and members who had been prone to leave the congregation had left. Few people in fact joined the independent Churches. Some who had departed in the heat of the moment even returned under the RMG umbrella.

It is evident that the Rev. Sihombing played a pivotal role in this process. His main task initially was to win people back, an endeavour that he at first thought would not be successful. Despite his mistrust of his own abilities, Sihombing was generally known as a man of integrity, great patience and diplomatic skills. He appears to have managed to utilise the Toba cultural tradition to gain respect also from opponents of the RMG. Despite being basically loyal to the RMG, he was able to show that he was not their mouthpiece, making it more likely that people would return to the RMG fold. These were qualities that Theis had obviously not shown in Medan. The development in 1934, whereby Sihombing became the only minister in Medan with a new status in relation to the missionaries, must have increased his status in the Toba community. The fact that no male missionary had direct authority over Medan also implied that opposition to missionaries became a less acute matter.

Despite the fact that Sihombing had an important role in consolidating the HKBP congregation in Medan, there were certainly other important reasons why the independent Churches were not able to increase their membership. One such reason was that conflicts appeared in the new Churches. In 1933, tension within Mission Batak led 10 families to join Huria Christen Batak Parjolo. In the same year, the latter denomination also had internal problems. A teacher who had recently been engaged was fired. Together with his family, he approached the HKBP congregation and became a member there. The conflicts led the leader of Huria Christen Batak, Sutan Malu, to visit the city in an effort to resolve the situation.

These conflicts must have made some members disillusioned. They had not left the congregation affiliated to the RMG in order to experience more conflicts elsewhere. A further reason for the declining enthusiasm was that the Churches did not gain the mass following that their supporters had hoped for. The resources of these Churches continued to be slim. Some members realised that,

---

83 Sianipar 1978, p. 66.
84 Müller, Einige Züge aus der Arbeit in der Gemeinde Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
compared with those who had remained loyal to the RMG or joined other missionary-led denominations, they did not have access to the same educational opportunities, which was a social handicap.

In order to establish new contacts with the HKBP, efforts were made by the independent Churches to approach the newly founded Church Synod. In 1931, Mission Batak, for instance, requested the Synod that they should be recognised as a part of the HKBP. In a unanimous answer, the Synod asked Mission Batak to return to the Church, because they did not differ in doctrine or faith. Because the independent Church did not wish to do so, the Synod did not want to have anything to do with them and did not accept their sacraments.85

It is difficult to judge how sincere the effort of Mission Batak was. On the one hand, the formation of the HKBP implied that some original demands of the movement for Church independence had been fulfilled. Some members of the independent Churches might have thought that the progress towards a real independent unitary Church had started and that it was time to re-unite with fellow Toba Christians. On the other hand, members of Mission Batak knew that missionaries still retained ultimate control in the Church. The suggestion that they should be regarded as a part of the HKBP was still not too far-fetched. The intention was that Mission Batak would remain an independent part of the Church, independent in the sense that it would remain outside the authority of missionaries.

The Synod showed an uncompromising attitude towards the independent Churches. Members of Mission Batak would have to leave or dissolve their organisation before being allowed into the HKBP. The response was not merely dictated by the missionaries but reflected the feelings of the Toba who were active in the congregations and had remained loyal to the RMG. They felt that the Toba who had formed independent Churches had split from the “mother Church”. The Church had the right to decide on the conditions for the re-admission of “schismatics” into the Church. These sentiments had the effect that relations with the independent Churches remained problematic even after western missionaries had lost all authority over the HKBP. Although people hoped that a united Batak Church would be formed, such efforts were not successful.

Even though those who remained within the HKBP often supported the negative attitude of the missionaries to the independent Churches, it is a mistake to assume that those who remained loyal to the missionaries were submissive.

An interesting document in this respect is a report written by Müller in 1933. With regard to the situation in Medan, he thought that a missionary could write two reports, one about steady hardships and joys and the other on the hidden

85 Aus dem Protokoll der Batakischen Synode 14-15 Oktober 1931. BM: 2.890. VEM.
things that affected the Toba. He first painted the idyllic picture of Christian Batak men and women coming to church on Sunday morning and of Bible-studies in various parts of town. On the other hand, there was, according to Müller, something “other” of which many were rather conscious, but which to the majority was unclear. The ”other” was the demand for full independence and doing away with the influence of foreign missionaries. According to Müller, the result was that each decision by him caused tension and strife. He though that “racial tension” (Rassegegensar.) caused problems in the congregation and that the missionary had always to be mindful of it.86

To illustrate the point, he referred to the events in 1933, when the congregation was planning for the celebration of the 100 years since the birth of Nommensen. The church council, led by the missionary, decided to invite prominent Europeans and representatives from other Protestant congregations, the main ones being the two Dutch congregations in town. In this situation, some Toba raised the question why the church council had to invite Europeans and whether it was not sufficient just to celebrate amongst themselves. In Müller’s opinion, the suggestion was even more controversial because one of the invited guests was the Governor of East Sumatra.87

With regard their attitude to the independent Churches and their demands, Müller claimed that it was difficult for the missionary to know what members really thought. It was very seldom possible to obtain a clear response to the demands from the independent Churches, as they thought it was an affair only for the Toba community.88 It is apparent that it was not thought to be appropriate or wise to discuss the matter whilst a missionary was present. How to work for more influence in relation to the missionaries was exclusively an issue for their community.

Further evidence, of a more indirect nature, of the attitude of the congregational members is that Müller’s writings from this period do not make a clear distinction between demands from those who had joined the independent Churches and those who had not.

The apparent conclusion of these missionary impressions is that the spirit of the independent Churches was not limited to the members of these Churches. Many HKBP members in Medan felt the same. They wanted to convince the Toba generally that the removal of missionary authority from Medan would in fact be the first step towards the removal of missionary control over the whole Church.

86 Müller, Bericht Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
87 Müller, Bericht Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
88 Müller, Einige Züge aus der Arbeit in der Gemeinde Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
The Rev. Sihombing and the striving for Toba control of the HKBP

Through its minister, the HKBP congregation in Medan became in 1940 involved in the successful Toba efforts to obtain a Toba leadership over the Church. The development was connected with the dramatic political developments in Europe.

On 10 May 1940, German troops invaded the Netherlands, which had the effect that the Dutch colony was cut off from the motherland and ruled from the military headquarters in Jakarta. All German citizens were interned, including the German RMG missionaries.99 Before their internment, they transferred authority to the Dutch missionaries who worked for RMG. Missionary de Kleine took over the position of Ephorus from Verwiebe. The property of the German mission society was confiscated by the Dutch war administration. They delegated authority to the Dutch mission consulate, a agency that was an intermediary between the government and the various mission organisations. The consulate set up the so-called Batak Nias Mission (Batak Nias Zending). The organisation took over all the property of the RMG in Tapanuli and on the island of Nias. They also started to transfer Dutch missionaries from other areas of the colony to North Tapanuli.90 Many Toba reacted strongly to this development and thought that the Dutch were taking over their Church. Some exclaimed: "The Rhenish mission (our father) is dead. Now the inheritance falls on the Batak Church (the child) ..."91.

A group who wanted full independence and the election of a Toba Ephorus demanded, and were able to arrange a general synod, in spite of the fact that the Batak Nias Mission wanted it to be postponed. The synod started in July 1940 and was attended by 91 delegates with a right to vote. The main issue was the election of the Ephorus.92 Previously, the Ephorus had been nominated by missionaries only and appointed by the central leadership of the RMG in Germany.93 But, after a heated debate, it was decided that both Toba and Europeans could run for election. The candidates had to be ordained ministers and one candidate was Justin Sihombing. In the first vote the top three candidates were Justin Sihombing (24 votes), K Sirait, who was a Toba minister from Sibolga (19 votes) and the Rev. de Kleine (16 votes). In the end, Sirait was chosen as Ephorus after

99 On the outbreak of the Pacific war in 1942, men were transferred to India, where they spent the war years, while women remained on Sumatra.
90 Nyhus 1987, pp. 69ff.
91 Nyhus 1987, p. 71.
92 Nyhus 1987, pp. 71ff.
93 This point is not entirely clear but is the likely conclusion from Nyhus' account of administrative reforms in the 1930s. Nyhus 1987, p. 61.
Sihombing had withdrawn, probably because of pressures from the east coast delegation that he should not split the Toba vote.\(^94\)

The fact that Sihombing decided to take part in these events shows that he was willing to assume a high responsibility within the HKBP and supported the demands for more Toba influence in this structure. His success in the first ballot shows that he had support in the Toba community. His work in an independent position in Medan, combined with his clear but diplomatic stand in relation to the independent Churches had made him a strong candidate to become Ephorus of the HKBP.

The new, Toba-dominated structure of the HKBP, however, meant that Sihombing received a new responsibility. He was elected Praeses by the Toba ministers of the HKBP District of the East Coast, Pakpak/Dairi and Aceh.\(^95\) The implication was that Medan was now again a corporate part of the HKBP district, but under the leadership of a Toba minister.

**Establishing new ethnic congregations**

Except for the independent Churches, the number of denominations to which Toba belonged increased in Medan during the 1930s. In 1933, Müller listed six congregations in Medan to which Toba belonged. They were: Huria Christen Batak (the congregation affiliated to the RMG), Huria Christen Batak (the independent Church), Mission Batak, Huria Batak Methodist (the Batak Methodist congregation), Huria Batak Roomsch Katolik (the Catholic Batak congregation) and Zeven Day Adventist Batak (Batak Adventists).\(^96\)

Apart from the plurality of congregations that Toba adhered to, the list also shows that their ethnic identification remained strong, even if they joined denominations in principle open to all ethnic groups.

Among the Toba who had migrated to the east coast, some decided to join the Methodist church and not just remaining temporarily under its auspices. In 1933, the Toba Methodists, about 25 families in all, had been organised in a congregation with its own minister.\(^97\) The background was that the Methodist mission had adopted a policy whereby Toba and Chinese Methodists were separated

\(^{94}\) Nyhus 1987, pp. 71ff.
\(^{95}\) Sianipar 1978, p. 79.
\(^{96}\) Müller, Einige Züge aus der Arbeit in der Gemeinde Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
\(^{97}\) Müller, Einige Züge aus der Arbeit in der Gemeinde Medan 1933. BM: 2.852. VEM.
distance themselves from the mainline Protestant Churches with regard to their attitude to *adat*. They did not eat food containing blood, which implied that during *adat* ceremonies they could not eat Toba ceremonial food (*saksang*), a pork stew containing blood.\(^{112}\) In spite of their critical attitude to *adat*, the Pentecostal movement in Tapanuli remained a Toba movement, using the Toba Batak language and in practice limiting their membership to Toba.

The developments in the 1930s illustrate the fact that denominational pluralism had become an important aspect of Toba church life in Medan. Sometimes differences in denominational affiliation led to conflicts, but they were articulated within the Toba community, with the means and strategies available to them. The ties between the clans were not broken, and at *adat* rituals, especially funerals, they attended regardless of the denomination to which they belonged.\(^{113}\)

The same pattern also occurred on other occasions. From the late 1920s, the Toba founded voluntary associations on a district basis. These organisations were open to Toba of all denominations. The Rev. Sihombing claimed that: “every time one has a meeting, those who gather there are from Mission Batak, the Catholics, ‘the 123’, the Sabbatarians (Advenists) and the Methodists.”\(^{114}\)

It is likely that prayers, text-readings or the singing of hymns took place during these meetings. In a sense, these meetings were ecumenical. To the Toba, it is more likely that they were gettings-together where mutual support could be found in the process of establishing themselves as an ethnic group in the city. On these occasions, differences or conflicts which had to do with congregational membership were put aside.

Among the migrants to Medan there were also Christians from other Batak groups than the Toba. In the mid-1930s, a small group of Christian Simalungun Batak migrated to Medan. The “few daring ones” who moved to Medan were manual labourers, small-scale traders or students, only 25 persons.\(^{115}\) Compared with the Toba, they were newcomers, irrespective of the fact that the Simalungun Batak lived more closely geographically to Medan. Because they were thought to be part of the People’s Church led by the RMG, it is likely that some of them initially attended worship in the HKBP church. But, in 1937, they held their own services in the Methodist Church near the central market. Services were led by a Methodist minister, but once a month they were visited by a Simalungun minister, Augustin


\(^{113}\) Theis, Jahresbericht 1931-32. BM: 2.852. VEM.

\(^{114}\) Bat. “Sai songon na maraha do ganup hali marpungu, ai sai saor do disi angka na masuk tu Mission Batak, Katholiek, ‘si 123’, Sabbatist dohot Methodist.” Bericht ni Justin Sihombing 1928. BM 2.946. VEM. See also Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1932. BM 2.852. VEM.

\(^{115}\) Girsang 1979, p. 7.
It is obvious that once Simalungun Christians had become a small own community, they preferred to hold services together under the leadership of a Methodist minister rather than take part in the HKBP service dominated by Toba.

This development was an outcome of the strivings of the Simalungun Batak Christians for autonomy within the HKBP. During the initial phase of the RMG mission in Simalungun, only Toba Batak was used. But, in the 1920s, during the massive Toba migration to the Simalungun area, there was a movement among the Simalungun Christians to uplift the status of the Simalungun Batak language and they demanded that a special district within the HKBP should be formed for them. The movement was led by the first Simalungun minister, J. Wismar Saragih. The movement only became stronger when the HKBP Synod in 1935 decided to change the name of the HKBP district from Simalungun-East Coast to District of Sumatra's East Coast, Aceh and Dairi, which did not even include the name Simalungun. It was only in 1940 that the new Toba leadership accepted the demand, mainly because the Simalungun Batak otherwise threatened to join the Karo Batak Christians under the auspices of the NZG instead.

In the 1930s, there was also a small Karo Batak congregation in Medan. At the time, there were about 20 Karo families and 50 students who lived in the city. The Christian Karo started to hold services together in 1926, and in 1931 they were able to use a house on Sungei Kerahstraat (the present Jalan Sungai Kera, near Jalan Prof. M. H. Yamin) in the north-eastern part of the city, where they held services. They did not build a church in Medan until the 1950s.

Ecumenical co-operation

At the same time as denominational affiliation became more and more differentiated in Medan, there were in the 1930s initiatives to build bridges between different Toba ethnic congregations and to other non-Toba congregations in the city.

Intra-Toba Batak ecumenism: The example of Pardomean Hot

The most important example of efforts to gather the Toba together, regardless of their affiliation to a specific Church, was the youth organisation Pardomean Hot ("the Permanent/Steadfast Union") founded in 1938. According to W. Lumbantobing, at the time chairman of the youth organisation of Huria

Girsang 1979, p. 7.
Interview, A. Ginting Suka.
Christen Batak in Medan, the organisation was founded when he and the youth leaders from other Churches felt the need to come together and form a Christian youth organisation. They felt that the Toba youth should not split up in the same way that the adults had done. The name of the organisation seems to have carried some implication of this kind. It was an implicit criticism of the adults, who had allowed prestige to induce them to go separate ways.

Members of Pardomean Hot included Toba from the youth organisations of Huria Christen Batak, the HKBP, Mission Batak and the Toba Methodists. The Catholics were absent in this context, which implies that, even though the Toba youth were critical of denominational splits in the community, they did not question the assumption that Catholicism and Protestantism were antagonistic Christian traditions.

Pardomean Hot was founded in May 1938 and had as its main activity the study of the Bible. A couple of months later, the organisation abandoned Bible studies as their main activity and instead focused on the study of adat and art. This development indicates that the organisation was initially thought of as an extended, Bible-study group, but that it soon broadened its aim and became an ecumenical group for cultural discussions. The number of members was never large but began with about 20 persons. According to W. Lumbantobing, the goal of the organisation was not very specific, and activities included both discussions and Bible studies. It appears to have been loosely organised and was mainly a social gathering, where Toba youth had opportunities to meet. Its basis was a sense of a common ethnic and religious identity.

Despite the support gained from the youth, the local leadership of the various Toba congregations did not respect the organisation. Soon after it had been founded, the local adult leadership of the congregations decided to give the youth leaders an ultimatum: if they did not withdraw from Pardomean Hot, they would be dismissed from their positions as youth leaders. The youth leaders carried on their activities, which lead to the dismissal of all the chairmen and secretaries of the youth organisations. Despite the action taken against them, the organisation carried on and was active until the end of the Dutch colonial period in 1942. The adults were suspicious of the organisation and did not accept that it was cooperating over the denominational borders that they had taken great pains to

119 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
120 Penatalqyanan yang Baik 1984, p. 25.
121 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, May 1938, Mailr. no. 668 geh/38, p. 14. ARA.
122 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, November 1938, Mailr. no. 1096 geh/39, p. 9. ARA.
123 A photograph of Pardomean Hot in 1938, including about 20 people, is reproduced in Penatalqyanan yang Baik 1984, p. 25.
124 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
Furthermore they suspected that the organisation was a cover-up for nationalistic activities. Because of the general growth of the nationalist movement at the time, this was a reasonable suspicion. Nationalist engagement was becoming dangerous, because the authorities were very careful and frequently interned people suspected of being sympathisers with the nationalist cause. Even adult Toba who were sympathetic to the nationalist movement thought that their children were taking unnecessary risks, if Padomean Hot was in fact imbued with nationalist ideals. According to Lumbantobing, the suspicion was, however, groundless. The organisation was not nationalistic and there were no political discussions on their agenda.

The founding of Padomean Hot is an example of youth not being satisfied with the effects of denominational divisions. It also reflected the need to come together for social activities. It is important to stress that the activities firmly remained within the boundaries of the Toba community. The organisation is therefore not an example of an ecumenical ideal that would include Christians, irrespective of which ethnic group they belonged to. The absence of Catholic Toba implied that the great divide between Protestant and Catholic Christianity was also a factor when the organisation was set up.

Co-operation with other indigenous Christians

The ecumenical interests of the Toba were not limited to their own ethnic group. In 1934, co-operation had developed between some of the Protestant congregations in Medan. They held services together several times each year. The congregations that participated were, besides the HKBP, the Javanese congregation within the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Methodists, the Karo Batak congregation, the Salvation Army and the congregation of indigenous Christians connected with the Protestansche Kerk. These congregations were all made up of indigenous Christians, even though they were led by westerners.

According to Müller, the ecumenical services were initiated by the HKBP congregation, a fact that was said to have "... contributed not a little to the self-esteem of the Batak ...". The Toba were, in other words, proud of their role in this context, because they had set the agenda. The Dutch congregations in the

125 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
126 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
127 Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 Medan. BM 2.852. VEM.
128 "... auch das Bat. Selbstgefühl nicht wenig hob ..." Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 des Missionsressortes Medan. BM: 2.852. VEM.
city were not taking part in the services but had decided to participate in a prayer week that was planned.\textsuperscript{129} The independent Toba Churches, i.e. Mission Batak and Huria Christen Batak, were notably absent. If the congregations in Medan had tried to join the group, the HKBP would have stopped them from doing so. In the terminology of the HKBP, only Churches were allowed into this co-operation, not sects and schismatics.\textsuperscript{130}

Even though the Dutch congregations joined in the prayer week, the ecumenical co-operation involved primarily the indigenous population. As Protestant Christians in a mainly Muslim milieu, they were said to feel the need to affirm unity over ethnic borders in order to gain in strength. It was also claimed that problems of communication were overcome by unity in faith.\textsuperscript{131}

J. Sihombing also took part in the ecumenical meetings of ministers that were held once a year in a small village near Kabanjahe in the Karo highlands. On these occasions European and indigenous ministers from mainline Protestant denominations participated.\textsuperscript{132} To illustrate the activities, the meeting in 1933 included two sessions. The first was held in Dutch for Europeans and those who understood that language. Various sermons and theological discussions were held and two of the themes were "Modern man and Christianity" and "The social crisis and Christianity".\textsuperscript{133} The themes were obviously chosen from the perspective of the developments in Europe during the 1930s, rather than the situation of Churches in northern Sumatra. The agenda was set by Europeans. The second session was open to everyone and probably included discussions about more practical matters. Sihombing was pleased to participate and thought it was impressive that so many ministers from various Churches could gather.\textsuperscript{134}

These two examples of ecumenical co-operation show that in the specific context of Medan the established Protestant denominations felt that there was a need to come together, address common issues and show their unity. It appears that, for indigenous Christians actually living in a Muslim milieu, this need was particularly important.

\textsuperscript{129} Müller, Jahresbericht 1934 Medan. BM 2.852. VEM.
\textsuperscript{130} This line of reasoning had the effect that the HKBP blocked these Churches from membership of ecumenical organisations until the 1960s.
\textsuperscript{131} Müller, Jahresbericht Medan 1934. BM 2.852. VEM.
\textsuperscript{132} These were the Karo mission, the Gereformeerde Kerk, the Protestantsche Kerk, the Javanese congregation affiliated to the Gereformeerde Kerk, the Methodist mission, the congregation of the Ambon and Menado Christians connected with the Protestantsche Kerk and the Salvation Army.
\textsuperscript{133} Sianipar 1987, pp. 73ff.
\textsuperscript{134} Sianipar 1987, pp. 74ff.
Cultivating particularistic and national identities

The development of Toba Batak voluntary associations

In this section, I shall discuss the development of Toba voluntary associations in colonial Medan. The main sources stem from the Dutch intelligence organisation of East Sumatra. They provide only limited information and are often restricted to stating that a particular organisation has come into being or has had a meeting. Still, the names of the organisations include ethnic and regional labels that say something about how people in Medan identified themselves. The reports are therefore important when it comes to constructing the ethnic landscape of Medan in the 1930s, in my case with a focus on the Toba.

The first Toba voluntary association in Medan was Sarikat Dosniroha, founded in 1914 as an organisation open to all Toba in Medan. In the late 1920s, the organisation was in general not heard of. It appears that it was no longer possible to include all Toba into Medan into one organisation. Instead, new voluntary associations were established, appealing to a variety of loyalties among the Toba.

One example was the earlier-mentioned development whereby the Toba founded voluntary associations in various districts of the city. Another example was the organisations created for members of different Christian congregations. The conflict in the late 1920s brought about separate organisations, for instance, among members of Mission Batak and Toba who had joined the Catholic Church. Particularly when a new congregation was formed as a result of a conflict, the need was felt to separate from others and to start its own voluntary association.

There were also associations that were based on marga who originated from a specific area in Tapanuli. In 1926, the interest group from the Toba area had founded its own, Tabahen Oenang Bahen Arta ("Money for social welfare"). The name had the obvious advantage that it could be abbreviated TOBA. It remained active at least until 1936. The fact that this organisation was still in existence at least ten years after the conflict in the 1920s indicates that the identification with "Toba" remained important, even when the heated conflict was

135 Interview, W. Lumbantobing.
136 Bericht ni Justin Sihombing 1928. BM: 2.946. VEM.
137 Kronieken Sumatra Missie, p. 88. ACH. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, June 1934 Mailr. no. 922 geh/ 34. ARA.
139 Its tenth anniversary was celebrated on 23 February 1936. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 315 geh/36, p. 11. ARA.
past. As for other areas in Tapanuli, the only organisation seems to have been Hatopan Pahae, organised by Toba from the Pahae region. They formed their organisation prior to 1936.140 Because the group from Pahae was active in conflict in the 1920s, I assume that the organisation was founded not very long after the conflict commenced.

In the 1930s, organisations were also founded that drew members from one marga group or even a single marga. Thus, in 1934, an association, Pinomar ni Somanimbil, was founded by members of the related marga Simanjuntak, Siahaan and Hutagaol.141 The organisation was active at least until February 1936.142 The name refers to the common male ancestor of these three clans from the Lake Toba region.143 In Toba culture, it is an image of common ancestry and togetherness.

An organisation with the same kind of origin was a branch of the study fund of Vereeniging Raja Narasaon that was set up in Medan in 1937. It aimed to support students among the descendants of Raja Narasaon.144 He was the common male ancestor of the clans Manurung, Sitorus, Sirait, Manurung, Butarbutar and Pane. These marga dominated the Uluan region south-west of Lake Toba.145

Organisations for individual clans do not seem to have been founded before 1942. In the 1930s, at least the Simanjuntak marga, one of the largest, formed organisations in areas to which its members had migrated. In 1936, an association for members of the marga living in the Simalungun and Karo areas was founded.146 In 1939, an association was formed for the members of the same marga living in Tanah Djawa, a rural area south of Medan.147 The Simanjuntak organisations seem to have been founded mainly in areas of Toba rural migration. In Medan, there were not yet enough clan members, and it was sufficient to join the more inclusive organisation Pinomar ni Somanimbil, together with the two other related clans.

Even though the information about each organisation is very limited, a clear image of the Toba community emerges from these examples. Because of the increase of the community, it was now easier to rely on and identify with only a section of

---

140 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 125 geh/36. ARA.
141 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 579 geh/34, p. 9. ARA. Bendera Kita, 24 February 1934.
142 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, February 1936, Mailr. no. 315 geh/36, p. 11. ARA. Vergouwen 1964, pp. 11f.
143 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, October 1937. Mailr. no. 113 geh/37. ARA.
144 Vergouwen 1964, p. 11.
145 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, October 1936, Mailr. no. 1239 geh/36, p. 7. ARA. In 1937 it was reported that the Simanjuntak association had held a meeting in the church of Huria Christen Batak in Pematang Siantar. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, November 1937, Mailr. no. 70 geh/38, p. 7. ARA.
146 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, May 1939, Mailr. no. 766 geh/39. ARA.
the community. The groups could be defined according to marginal membership, regional origin or denominational affiliation. This development started in the 1920s, when sub-ethnic identities were stressed. In the 1930s, the development continued and the differentiation, with regard to the voluntary associations and the number of identities that these organisations adopted, continued to increase.

Compared with other Batak groups in Medan, the number of Toba organisations and the differentiation among them are even more striking. It was, for instance, only in 1934 that the Karo Batak in Medan founded their voluntary association, Setia Karo.\textsuperscript{148} The late formation of such an organisation had to do with the recent formation of a stable Karo community in Medan\textsuperscript{149}

Political affiliations of the Toba Batak

That Toba could have sympathies with the nationalist movement in general, I have already demonstrated several times. From the late 1920s, Toba in the political realm had to relate to new developments within the nationalist movement.

Before 1927, nationalistic groups had appealed to a vague sense that the indigenous population, called Indonesians, had something in common. Parties that had been organised locally or regionally, such as Hatopan Kristen Batak, had been genuinely nationalistic and could, even though they worked only among a specific group of people, co-operate with other nationalistic parties. Even though Sukarno’s inclusive nationalism after 1927 came to the forefront of the nationalist movement, the continuing developments show that it became important just what kind of nationalism one supported. Muslims were furthermore divided between traditionalist and modernist groups. The non-Muslim nationalists were divided between those who wanted to use a western ideology, like communism or socialism, in nationalist agitation or those who, like the inclusive Sukarno, wanted to put “the nation first”. Among both inclusive and religious nationalists, there were tensions between “radicals”, who wanted to use mass mobilisation and non-co-operation against Dutch rule, and “moderates”, who thought it was better to co-operate with Dutch-sponsored institutions in order to increase the influence of Indonesians. One example of such an institution was the Volksraad (People’s Council), originally launched as an advisory council in 1918, in which the proportion of Indonesians was about 40%.

\textsuperscript{148} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, May 1934, Mailr. no. 821 geh/34, p. 6. ARA.
\textsuperscript{149} The same can be said about the voluntary organisation of the people from the island of Nias that was set up in 1936. Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, March 1936, mailr.450 geh/36, p. 12. ARA.
On the east coast of Sumatra, there was, after the Communist party had been crushed in the mid-1920s, no longer any party in the region with a mass appeal. Political activities became largely limited to the urban elite. This was partly a result of the policies of the Dutch local administration in restricting the activities of the nationalist groups. In these efforts, they received the eager help of the sultans. Another reason was that the ethnic diversity of the region implied that it was difficult for the various ethnic groups to unite behind a political strategy.\textsuperscript{150}

How then did the Toba in Medan, many of whom belonged to the educated elite in the city, relate to these developments? In Chapter 4, I have shown that an indirect impact from the nationalist movement could be observed among the Toba in the 1920s, but in the 1930s few were directly involved in political activities, let alone nationalist parties. Whenever I brought up the issue with the old Toba I have interviewed, most of them said that they did not have any political interest at the time, that politics were not discussed where they worked and that they did not mind the Europeans being in positions of authority. Europeans were thought to be more competent than the indigenous population and should therefore assume leadership. My impression is that the majority of the Toba in the 1930s were fairly content with their situation and the income and prestige that their life in Medan could generate. Even if a person sympathised with nationalist demands, becoming involved in nationalist activities implied that he or she would run the risk of being suspended from employment, a risk not likely to be taken. These impressions confirm the general analysis that those who graduated in the Dutch educational system and managed to obtain employment that equalled their qualifications were rarely involved in the nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{151}

On the other hand, there were political options that did not entail the dangers that people involved in the nationalist movement had to face. Some of the most prominent Toba in Medan were, for instance, involved in the Christelijke Ethische Partij (CEP). The party was originally a Dutch Christian party founded on the ideals of the Ethical Policy, but in the 1930s, it had become a loyal defender of the colonial system. In North Sumatra, the party was supported by RMG missionaries, and Hemmers, the Dutch supporter of the RMG who two decades earlier had arranged for Toba to hold services at the Gereformeerde Kerk, was its most active propagandist. Hemmers held a meeting of the Party in Tarutung as early as 1927.\textsuperscript{152} According to Castles, the party was in the 1930s rather strong in Tapanuli, when other nationalist parties had failed. It had become the most influential political party among the Toba.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{150} Reid 1979, pp. 59f.
\textsuperscript{151} Aritonang 1994, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{152} Anonymous, Propaganda Christelijke Indische Partij. \textit{Soara Batak} 18 June 1927.
\textsuperscript{153} Castles 1972, pp. 197ff.
In August 1938, an Indonesian branch of the party was founded in Medan under the auspices of the local European branch. The chairman was Daniel Marpaung, a Toba who was a prominent teacher, and the language used was Dutch.\textsuperscript{154} At a preparatory meeting, a Dutch activist of the party held a \textit{causerie} on the need for Christian politics and a Christian political party. He also urged indigenous Christians to challenge Muslims in the political arena. With reference to the forthcoming elections to the Municipal Council, he asked whether it was right for a Christian to vote for a Muslim candidate. The answer from both Dutch and Indonesian Christians was that this was not in line with Christian faith and public interest.\textsuperscript{155} The animosity towards Christian support for Muslim candidates for the Municipal Council should be interpreted as a warning against nationalist-minded Christians, who thought that the common political engagement of Indonesians should not be threatened by specific religious demands. The founding of this branch of the CEP shows that a group of influential Toba was not only content with the colonial system, but also tried actively to defend it when it was attacked. They were convinced of the need for “Christians politics”, which in this case implied that Christians, Dutch and indigenous, should act together as a political interest group against Muslim and “inclusive” nationalists.

It is, however, important to point out that some Toba actively supported the inclusive nationalist parties. Two members of the board of the voluntary association Dos ni Roha Pardomean, all of whom were unemployed, Pajaman Hutagalung and Hulrich Simorangkir, were, for instance, in 1938 members of Pendidikan National Indonesia.\textsuperscript{156} This party was influenced by socialism and led by the Minangkabau politician Hatta.

Even though a number of Toba were active members or supporters of these parties, I have no example to show that the Toba in Medan assumed leading positions. In Pematang Siantar, this was the case. In the 1920s, the Toba Urbanus Pardede was the leader of a group of the PKI in Pematang Siantar. He was captured and interned, together with other nationalist leaders, in Boven Digul (New Guinea) from 1927 to 1930.\textsuperscript{157} In the mid-1930s, the local branch of Partai Indonesia (Partindo), the party led by Sukarno at the time, was led by A. M. Sipahutar. He is said to have been unemployed. Other local leaders of Partindo included Muslims from the Mandailing and Minangkabau ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{158} The general conclusion from these examples is that the Toba who were active in or only open

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, August 1938, Mailr. no. 1004 geh/38. ARA.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, July 1938, Mailr. no. 323 geh/38. ARA.
  \item \textsuperscript{156} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, April 1938, Mailr. no. 563 geh/38, p 14. ARA.
  \item \textsuperscript{157} Reid 1979, p. 60.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr no. 32 geh/35. ARA.
\end{itemize}
supporters of inclusive nationalist parties did not belong to the educated élite, at least not in the sense that they had obtained profitable employment.

In Medan, the major trend appears to have been that nationalist-minded Toba set up parties and groups on a Christian basis. In November 1934, a branch of Himpunan Pemuda Kristen Indonesia (The Association of Indonesian Christian Youth) was founded in Medan. A month earlier, a branch of this organisation had been founded in Pematang Siantar. The founder was B. H. Hutajulu, who, besides his work as office clerk in a private company, was teaching at the Malay-Dutch School. The goal of the organisation was “to unite all Christian Indonesian youth in the whole Netherlands Indies.” In May 1935, Hutajulu was imprisoned for writing a political article published in the Toba paper Bintang Batak. After Hutajulu’s imprisonment, the organisation disintegrated, and in October 1935, it was dissolved, owing to internal problems.

In May 1934, a discussion group called the Parsadaan Christen Batak (Batak Christian Association) was founded in Medan. This group intended to work on social, educational and economic questions. It also worked to gain representation on local and national, political bodies, i.e. the Municipal Council and the Volksraad. A month earlier, the Persatuan Christen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Union) was founded in Pematang Siantar. The Toba involved were divided on the question of whether the foundation of the organisations should be Christianity or a more “neutral” base. Despite these differences, the Toba involved in these two organisations in general favoured co-operation with other, Indonesian, political groups. The reason for founding these parties was to counter accusations, from Muslims in general and Mandailing Batak in particular, that one had to be a Muslim to be a convinced nationalist. It is likely that such sentiments were important not only in Muslim nationalist parties, but also among Muslims who supported other nationalist parties.

In August 1936, a branch of the Catholic nationalist party Persatuan Politiek Katholiek Indonesia (PPKI) was founded in Medan. One of the founders was Maraidon Siregar, an Angkola Batak Catholic who worked as a teacher. In the

---

159 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, November 1934 Mailr. no. 32 geh/35 p. 10. ARA.
160 “... alle Christen Indonesische jongeren in geheel Nederlands-Indie te vereenigen.” Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Malir. 1360 geh/34, p. 7. ARA.
161 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, June 1935 Mailr. no. 869 geh/35, p. 8. ARA.
162 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, October 1935 Mailr. no. 1317 geh/35, p. 9. ARA.
165 Susanto 1989, pp. 45f.
166 Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, August 1936, Mailr. no. 1061 geh/36, p. 3. ARA.
early 1930s, he had studied on Java, where he had come into contact with a group of nationalist-minded Catholics. He also became acquainted with the first Indonesian Catholic bishop Sugyapranatha, who was a devoted nationalist. These contacts led him to realise that Indonesian Catholics had common interests and that a branch of the Catholic party should be set up also in North Sumatra. The party branch in Medan was small and included mainly, but not exclusively, Toba.\textsuperscript{167}

In the Catholic voluntary association Pardomean Katolik, the question of the admission of Siregar to membership led to a dispute in 1938. Some members thought that, as secretary of the nationalist Catholic party, he was applying for membership only to use the organisation for political purposes, while others, presumably a minority, supported that political goal.\textsuperscript{168} One month later, the Pardomean Katolik elected a new board.\textsuperscript{169} The conflict about the goals of the organisation was the likely reason. Because M. Siregar and Pardamean Katolik are not mentioned later in the Dutch sources, the "non-political" orientation of the organisation appears to have continued.

These examples show that there was a demand for Christian political parties and groups, and not only among the open defenders of the colonial state. It is somewhat difficult to assess where they belonged on the political scale from "moderate" to "radical". Persatuan Christen Indonesia and the Catholic party appear to have been more to the "left", than, for example, Parsadaan Christen Batak. Like other parties of the kind, they were generally short-lived but still showed that support for the nationalist cause had a base also among Toba Christians.

Concluding remarks

The first impression of the developments in the 1930s is one of diversity and vitality. A number of new Christian congregations, political groups and ethnic organisations were set up. In social terms, the Toba community also became more diversified. Despite this plurality, it remained a unity. When \textit{adat} ceremonies were performed, the Toba attended regardless of the differences in denominational affiliation or political conviction. Occasionally, they would also gather for services across denominational borders, and ethnic solidarity could be the basis for ecumenical action. The main example is the development of Pardomean Hot.

\textsuperscript{167} Interview, Maraidon Siregar (b. 1911). For an overview of Catholic nationalism during the colonial period, see Bank 1983, pp. 40ff.

\textsuperscript{168} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, Mailr. no. 1080 geh/38, p. 22. ARA.

\textsuperscript{169} Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra, October 1938, Mailr. no. 1217 geh/38, p. 14. ARA.
During this period, relations with Tapanuli were upheld and the Toba in Medan were engaged in developments in "the homeland". But the impression of the Toba community in Medan in the 1930s is still that it had established its own flourishing social world, where dependence on Tapanuli was less important than during, for instance, the first decade of migration.

The consolidation of the HKBP implied that the ideal of the People's Church was alive and well. The tradition had the effect that HKBP representatives in relation to the independent Churches regarded themselves as following the only valid Toba Christian tradition. With regard to the Toba independent Churches, the effort of Mission Batak to reconnect with the HKBP shows that they were willing to recognise the HKBP, in the sense that it was a valid Toba organisation. They preferred not to remain a separate group but to be recognised within the HKBP structure, connected with the ideal of the People's Church. But, because of the difficulties in relation to the HKBP, the independent Churches appear to have developed into ethnic Churches, in which the ideal of encompassing the whole ethnic group was not stressed, as in the HKBP. On the other hand, one should add that the establishment of the separate Simalungun congregation, and for that matter the Karo Christian gatherings too, implied a failure if the People's Church were to be extended outside the borders of the Toba group.

Toba who joined the Methodists or the Catholic Church developed their own congregations within these, in principle, multi-ethnic Christian traditions. In this process, they were aided by the western Church workers who adhered to the explicit policy of ethnic separation. Ethno-religious identity was not maintained on the Church level, but in separate ethnic congregations. A similar development most likely occurred among Toba Adventists and Pentecostals.

On comparing the development of Toba political organisations with that of ethnic ones, they represent two contrasting developments. The first was to broaden the perspective and develop the standpoint with regard to developments on the national level. Toba nationalist groups embraced the evolving national movement, showing that Christians could indeed be counted upon in the nationalist struggle, while Toba supporters of the CEP thought that Christians from various regions would have to co-operate in order to preserve colonial society. In contrast, the ethnic organisations stressed more and more the particular sub-ethnic identities within the growing Toba community. In this community, it was now easier to gain enough support from one's clan-mates. This was done in an ethnic landscape in which the pressure to assimilate was becoming weaker, and even groups, such as the Mandailing, who previously had done their best to assimilate, were asserting themselves as an ethnic group. These two developments need not be seen as
conflicting with one another. Instead, they represent different strategies used for different purposes.

With regard to the development of the nationalistic and the women's organisations discussed in this chapter, it is significant that it appears that initiatives were rarely taken in order to broaden the perspective and appeal to women and men of other ethnic groups or religions. In Medan, the dominant trend was for Toba women to organise themselves with regard to problems they encountered as Toba women and for Toba nationalists to found Christian groups in order to promote nationalist ideals in the Toba community. At least on the level of the élite, the tradition of Christian nationalism was dominant. One may compare Pematang Siantar, where Toba leaders appeared within the inclusive nationalist parties. In that city, the Toba community was stronger and people were more willing to join these groups. On the east coast, it was much more difficult to found organisations across ethnic or religious borders, and the Toba, being a small minority, to a much larger extent remained within their own group when organising themselves.

As for the Toba congregations, the main examples during the 1930s of reaching out to other groups were the ecumenical initiatives. The Protestant Toba tried to gain strength by stressing the common Christian identity, mainly with other indigenous, Protestant Christians in the city. In contrast to Tapanuli, the minority situation in Medan was an important factor that made Medan a place where ecumenical initiatives were taken.
CHAPTER 6

In the Shadow of the Rising Sun (1942-1945)

Introduction

During the 1930s, the Toba community in Medan manifested vigour and increasing strength. The community grew and many religious, political and ethnic organisations were founded. In 1942, these conditions changed radically because of the Japanese invasion. Indonesians generally now had to confront a new hegemony that replaced Dutch colonial rule. The Japanese provided a new economic and political framework, to a large extent conditioned by the necessities of war. They also pursued and implemented religious policies that reflected their own understanding of the relation between politics and religion. Both the general political and economic dimensions of Japanese rule and the specific religious policies pursued represented a new and serious problem for Toba ethno-religious identity. The obvious chronological limit of this chapter is the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

Since Benda published The Crescent and the Rising Sun in 1958, it has been well known that the Japanese in Indonesia made conscious efforts to win orthodox Muslim leaders over to their cause. Benda deals mainly with the conditions on Java and has a tendency to equate Indonesian Muslims with orthodox Muslims on Java. Consequently, he does not discuss whether Japanese policy had variations depending on the religious composition of the local population or which part of the Japanese armed forces was responsible for a certain area. It is also sometimes difficult to discover from his discussion whether policies were aimed only at Muslims or directed towards all religious groups.

With regard to Japanese policies towards Christian groups in Indonesia, there is still no general study. The standard works on (Protestant) Church history in Indonesia, by Müller-Kräger and van den End, do not provide much information about this period in Indonesian history, let alone any analysis of it. The result is

1 See Müller-Kräger 1968 and End 1989.
that no general discussion about how Japanese administrations handled local religious conditions is available. Furthermore, the issue of how Japanese policies in Indonesia related to religious policies in Japan itself and in the rest of the short-lived Japanese, colonial empire has been neglected. One problem is that the sources are generally scarce, and scholars would need to be able to work with sources in Japanese in order to gain a more complete picture.

Regarding North Tapanuli and the east coast, Nyhus has made a pioneering effort. In his dissertation on the history of the HKBP from 1940 to 1965, he has devoted considerable attention to the period. I have generally benefited greatly from his effort and through him been able to locate important sources for the period. Although I shall frequently refer to Nyhus’ work, my discussion focus on Medan and occasionally question and complement his analysis. With regard to Japanese religious policies, I shall take his analysis one step further. In view of the lack of general studies in this field, I shall make brief efforts to relate the developments on North Sumatra to the religious policies in Japan itself and in the rest of its colonies, in the rest of East Asia and in Indonesia.

The main analytical questions in this chapter will be as follows: In what way did the conditions of Toba life in Medan change and what effects did the new rule have on congregational life? How did Japan pursue its religious policies in Indonesia and what direct effect can be observed with regard to the Toba? In what way could Japanese religious policies be accommodated and their interpretation negotiated by Toba leaders?

A new hegemony established

The expansion of Japanese power in Southeast Asia and Indonesia

Since the late 19th century, Japan had started to expand its influence in Northeast Asia and became a colonial power with the annexation of Korea in 1910. During the 1930s, the increasing military strength of Japan had enabled it to expand into areas of Northeast Asia, such as Manchuria. In the early 1940s, the expansion continued into Southeast Asia and the Pacific. In Japanese political rhetoric, the goal was to incorporate the whole region into a “Greater East-Asian Co-prosperity Sphere”, where nations under the leadership of “Big Brother” Japan would prosper without the influence of western colonialists.
On 7 December 1941, Japan raided Pearl Harbour and on 15 February 1942, Singapore was occupied, followed by Burma in June 1942. As for the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese landed their forces on Sulawesi and Borneo in January 1942, and on 6 March the Dutch in Jakarta surrendered. The only part of the Dutch colony that was not occupied was the southern part of New Guinea. Japanese aircraft bombed the harbour of Belawan outside Medan in January 1942 and on 13 March 1942, seven days after they had taken Jakarta, Japanese troops landed on the coast outside Medan. They met with little or no resistance from the Dutch forces. The expansion of Japan was soon halted, and from mid-1942 Allied forces gradually drove the Japanese back on all fronts. An exception was the Dutch East Indies, where the Allies entered only eastern Borneo and the western part of New Guinea. The developments implied that, once the Japanese forces had established themselves in Indonesia, they remained there until the end of the war without having to fight on this territory.

Japan divided the Dutch colony into three, separate, administrative units. Borneo, Sulawesi and the islands of the eastern archipelago were administered by the Japanese Navy, Java and Madura were administered by the 16th Army and Sumatra by the 25th Army. These three units had little contact with each other and the attitude of the Japanese to the religious and political life of the islands varied accordingly.

The Japanese 25th Army entered Medan early in the morning of 13 March 1942. The troops met no serious challenge from the Dutch forces, as they had left a few days before. The Japanese 25th Army had its headquarters in Singapore and on Sumatra a local headquarters was set up in Bikittinggi on the west coast. In Medan, a military governor was stationed with authority over the east coast and Tapanuli. Medan thus became one of the local centres of Japanese administration on Sumatra. Almost all Europeans from the nations at war with Japan were interned. Only a few of them were temporarily needed as technical experts at plantations and factories before they were interned too. A small number of missionaries escaped internment.

The incorporation of North Sumatra into the Greater East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere was symbolically marked in the measurement of time. The Japanese calendar was introduced, in which years were most commonly counted from the

---

3 Sinar 1972, pp. 29ff.
4 Bank 1983, p. 92. The last were interned in September 1943, Dootjes 1952, p. 14. Many of these internees died in the internment camps to which they were sent for the duration of the war. In 1942, 1500 Dutch and 500 British internees were also sent abroad to build the railroad between Burma and Thailand. Dootjes 1952, p. 14.
5 See the discussion later in this chapter.
crowning of the first Japanese emperor. 1942 then became 2602. Official time on Sumatra was also equated with Tokyo time, 2.5 hours before local time.

Even before the arrival of the Japanese in North Sumatra, the local population had heard about their steady expansion in Southeast Asia. The arrival of Japanese armed forces in Indonesia could be expected in the near future. On the radio, Japanese broadcasts assured the people that they would not come to occupy the area but to liberate them from Dutch oppression. Promises were also made about the independence of Indonesia, and *Indonesia Raya*, the proposed national anthem of Indonesia, was played frequently. Some people started early to prepare themselves for what was to come. A leading Toba nationalist claimed, for instance, that he had already started to study Japanese a year before Japanese forces entered Indonesia.

When Japanese troops entered Medan, many hoped for the quick independence of Indonesia and shouts of "*banzai*" could be heard everywhere from enthusiastic Indonesians. It was not long before these hopes of independence faded and the new rulers established total control in the political field. On 15 March, the Japanese military gathered prominent people in Medan together for a first meeting with the new rulers. On this occasion, an Indonesian delegate thanked the Japanese for liberating them from Dutch oppression. On the other hand the Japanese officer told the persons present that they should help Japan and mobilise all resources for the war. Three days after their arrival in Medan, the Japanese army started to remove red and white Indonesian flags and forbade the display of this national symbol. The Japanese forbade most political and social organisations and gradually established their own. All schools were also nationalised.

The best-known Japanese organisations were Sendehan, the information bureau responsible for promoting Japanese programmes and Japanese ideology, and Kempetai, the military police responsible for intelligence and interrogation. The latter organisation soon gained a reputation for being brutal and merciless. A less well-known Japanese intelligence organisation, Tokokai, which was subordinate under the military police, was also set up. It had an even worse repute than

---

6 The Japanese sometimes also used the so-called Showa system, in which the years were counted from the crowning of the present emperor, in this case from 1926, which was Showa 1. Consequently, 1942 was Showa 16. *Japanese bezetting* 1960, p. 184.
7 *Japanese bezetting* 1960, p. 186.
8 Hamka 1974, III, p. 38.
10 Lumbantobing 1976, pp. 19f.
12 Hamka 1974, III, pp. 37f.
14 Nyhus 1987, p. 88.
Kempetai. The chairman was an Indonesian who had previously worked as police officer, and Toba were also involved in the organisation.

In these intelligence organisations, Indonesians were employed as interpreters and informers. These men were transferred all over Sumatra to fulfil their task. A Toba informant who had worked as an interpreter told me that he was moved around all the time, from Padang to Aceh. He was still distressed by the harsh methods and cruelty that he had witnessed and could not stop.

Indonesians were also made to participate in the military forces. One of the organisations launched was Heiko, the Indonesian auxiliary units for the army. Many Heiko units were sent abroad to help Japan in the war, especially against the British in Burma. Most of these people never came back. Gyu Gun was a paramilitary force that consisted of Indonesians and was designed to defend their own home area. Members of Gyu Gun were also used as forced labour. Many Indonesians were recruited to these organisations more or less by force or on false premises. In the paramilitary units, there were, on the other hand, young men who liked the discipline and order of the Japanese soldiers and who took pride in their new positions and military skills.

A striking feature of the political life of the east coast is that there were hardly any organised activities against Japanese rule. In spite of the fact that resentment of Japanese rule soon became widespread, it was difficult to establish a common attitude to the new rulers, let alone to start violent resistance. In Aceh, an area with a long history of rebellion against the Dutch, there was one large rebellion against Japan in November 1942.

On the east coast the conflicting interests of ethnic and religious groups continued to influence the political life of the region. In this context, a Muslim leader made the observation that it was much easier to organise the people, for example, among the Minangkabau on the west coast, where it was easier to settle

15 *Japanse bezetting* 1960, p. 173.
16 *Japanse bezetting* 1960, p. 165, document no. 55. In this document, a number of Chinese are also said to have been collaborators with the Japanese. It is, however, somewhat difficult to evaluate this testimony given to the Allied Commission for War Crimes. The person who delivered the testimony was identified only as Indonesian. It is possible that this person was neither a Toba nor a Chinese and for ethnocentric reasons wanted to put the blame for collaborating with the Japanese intelligence organisation on ethnic groups he did not like. On the other hand, it is likely that the Japanese intelligence used people from all ethnic groups and it is possible that there were many Toba among these, because of their generally high level of education. The Chinese were certainly needed by the Japanese to make contact with the local Chinese population.
17 Interview, S. Lumbantobing (born 1915).
18 Nyhus 1987, p. 88.
conflicts and establish consensus because of the ethnic homogeneity of the population.\textsuperscript{20} One of the most important conflicts on the east coast was centred on the role of the Malay sultans. Japanese policy towards the sultans was cautious and, in line with the Dutch policies, their incomes and religious authority were maintained.\textsuperscript{21} They had, however, lost much of their former authority, and the Japanese authorities developed the relations with Muslim organisations such as Muhammadiyah.\textsuperscript{22} Yakub Siregar, a Muslim Batak nationalist from South Tapanuli, even organised a paramilitary youth group whose aim was to get rid of the power of the Malay sovereigns. The Malays, on the other hand, felt that people from other areas had started to take over political life on the east coast and formed their own political organisation, the “Movement to build up Greater Asia”. It was initially led by the Malay doctor Mansur.\textsuperscript{23} Some Malay also thought that Indonesian nationalism was a Javanese movement to oppress Malays.\textsuperscript{24} In the face of such conflicting interests, it is not surprising that it was difficult to establish a common approach to Japanese rule. These dynamics also made it clear that the position of the sultans was precarious. Having lost the support of the Dutch, they were now dependent on the new master. It was obvious that, without enough support from Japan, they were at risk of losing out to groups opposing them.

The inability to oppose Japanese rule on the east coast of Sumatra may be compared with conditions in Aceh. In this Muslim region, an uprising against Japanese rule was launched in November 1942.\textsuperscript{25}

Establishing representative councils

When the Allied forces started to push Japan out of the areas they had conquered in Asia, Japanese officials more actively sought support from the local population. To this end, they established advisory councils led by Indonesians. On the regional level, the Japanese established Syu Sangi Kai. Its Indonesian members came from various ethnic groups and included politicians and cultural and religious leaders.\textsuperscript{26} At the end of 1943, a Syu Sangi Kai was established in Tapanuli and the members included Justin Sihombing, who by then had become Ephorus

\textsuperscript{20} Hamka 1974, III, p. 141. When Hamka wrote this book in 1951, he was probably influenced by the recent events of the social revolution and the ethnic tensions in the struggle for independence from 1945 to 1949.
\textsuperscript{22} Pelly 1983, pp. 255f.
\textsuperscript{23} Reid 1978, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{24} Hamka 1974, III, pp. 138f.
\textsuperscript{25} See Hamka 1974, p. 68, for an account of the uprising.
\textsuperscript{26} Nyhus 1987, p. 474.
of the HKBP, Saul Lumbantobing, the leader of Huria Christen Batak, and F. Lumbantobing who acted as chairman. At the same time, an advisory council of which the new HKBP clergyman in Medan, T. S. Sihombing, and a Toba lay person were members, was established in Medan. Religious councils were also established in North Sumatra as part of the new Japanese policy and an office for religious affairs was established in Medan.

On Java, Japanese officials sought the support of nationalist leaders, the most important being Sukarno and Hatta. The 25th Army on Sumatra was much slower in this process. According to a high Japanese official on Sumatra, the Japanese administration thought that the local population were not developed enough politically and culturally to be able to rule themselves. The cries for independence were also weaker on Sumatra, compared with Java. The support of the Japanese administration on Sumatra for the Indonesian national cause was therefore half-hearted.

In 1945, the Japanese formed a central advisory committee for Sumatra which had the task of preparing for independence. It consisted of 50 members. The Japanese commander on Sumatra appointed one-half of the members, on the advice of local officials. The other half was elected by the various regional councils. In July 1945 the representatives met in Bukittinggi and the delegation from East Sumatra was the largest one. Seven representatives from the region included the Muhammadiyah leader Hamka, two Javanese intellectuals, two Malay representatives of the sultans, a Raja from Simalungun and a Chinese. No Toba from the east coast were appointed to this body. The reason was probably that many of them had left the region and were a small minority unable to influence the composition of the delegation.

From North Tapanuli, the best-known representative was the Toba nationalist Filip Lumbantobing. Most of the formal discussions were dictated by the need of the Japanese to mobilise support for the war effort. This body was still important because it provided a meeting-place for nationalists from many ethnic and religious groups from Sumatra. The Muhammadiyah leader Hamka, for instance, said of Lumbantobing that “...he wore a sarong. Even though he was a Christian, his symbol was a sarong. His heart was always Indonesian and Batak, so that until now he is loved by the people in Tapanuli, even by those who are

---

27 Nyhus 1987, p. 474.
28 These efforts will be discussed later in this chapter.
32 This development will be discussed later in this chapter.
Informal discussions were also held on the need to mobilise resources against the Dutch when Japan had lost the war. Even though these organisations had a civilian character, Indonesian participants soon realised that their primary aim was to drum up support for the war that Japan was engaged in. Some people who had worked closely together with the Japanese also became disillusioned when they realised that it was only Japanese priorities that mattered.

In 1944 some of the original hopes for Indonesian independence were revived when the Japanese Prime Minister promised future independence for Indonesia. Indonesians were now allowed to use the red and white flag and to sing the Indonesian national anthem. The local journal that the Japanese had started in Medan began to include nationalistic articles, and local politicians held meetings at which one of the slogans was "If Japan loses, we will not lose." In spite of these adaptations to local sentiments, the Japanese made it clear that they had the ultimate power. There are even signs that they became more suspicious of the political aspirations of Indonesians at the end of the war.

Japan’s economic policies

The arrival of the Japanese also had the effect that the economic situation of the region changed. It has been claimed that the main reason for the Japanese expansion into South-east Asia was to secure the flow of raw materials to Japan. But, as long as the war was raging, the region had to be transformed in order to support the Japanese war effort.

The Japanese authorities pursued a policy of isolation whereby Sumatra was cut off, not only from the rest of Southeast Asia but also from the other islands of Indonesia. Internally, the policy of self-sufficiency implied that there was a ban on moving goods from one region to another. Even before the arrival of the Japanese forces, the war and isolation from Europe had had the effect that the

---

34 Hamka 1974, III, pp. 170f.
35 See, for instance, Hamka 1974, III, p. 133.
38 See Nyhus 1987, p. 91.
39 Beasley 1987, p. 220.
40 Nyhus 1987, pp. 89f.
imports of food decreased. The Dutch war administration tried to rely on locally produced products.\footnote{Dootjes 1952, p. 11.} Before 1942, the region had imported rice. But in an effort to mobilise local resources for the war, the Japanese encouraged Indonesians to start cultivating rice and other food crops on plantation land.\footnote{Liddle 1970, p. 47.} These efforts were, however, not successful and high levies, sometimes up to 50\%, were introduced for rice.\footnote{Nyhus 1987, p. 89.} The living conditions of the indigenous population became difficult, and there were even plantation workers who starved to death.\footnote{Hamka 1974, III, p. 183.} In cities like Medan, the problems of distribution meant that it was difficult to obtain food and basic products such as soap and matches.\footnote{Nyhus 1987, pp. 89f.}

Before 1942, the supply of clothing depended on imported cotton cloth or threads. Because Japanese efforts to plant cotton locally were not successful, people had to use fibres from trees normally used to make carpets or even tree bark.\footnote{Nyhus 1987, p. 90.} The other option was to just wear the old clothes in spite of what they looked like. On one occasion, a HKBP teacher who was going to preach at a service in Tapanuli had such worn-out trousers that he felt compelled to stand in the pulpit from the time the congregation entered the church until they left. It was only then that he could leave.\footnote{Sarumpaet 1961, p. 64.} One source claims that those who could not dress properly did not go to church.\footnote{Tampubolon 1978, p. 118.} Another says that those who were unwilling to go to church because they did not have proper clothing eventually attended services at which everyone wore clothes that were equally old and ugly.\footnote{Sarumpaet 1961, p. 65.}

In order to support the war effort and manage various projects, the Japanese Army recruited Indonesian men as forced labour. In Medan, people of all kinds, even white-collar workers, were recruited.\footnote{Sihombing 1965, p. 15.} The physical and emotional sufferings of the men were paralleled more than enough by the problems the women had to face. In some areas, the shortage of men was very striking. In Tanah Alas and the Pakpak area, some congregations of Huria Christen Batak had to close down. All the men had been recruited for forced labour.\footnote{Tampubolon 1978, p. 114.} To allow women to become elders, let alone ministers, or to lead services was not considered a serious option. Furthermore, in this situation many women probably left the area to return to their home villages.

\footnote{Dootjes 1952, p. 11.} \footnote{Liddle 1970, p. 47.} \footnote{Nyhus 1987, p. 89.} \footnote{Hamka 1974, III, p. 183.} \footnote{Nyhus 1987, pp. 89f.} \footnote{Nyhus 1987, p. 90.} \footnote{Sarumpaet 1961, p. 64.} \footnote{Tampubolon 1978, p. 118.} \footnote{Sarumpaet 1961, p. 65.} \footnote{Sihombing 1965, p. 15.} \footnote{Tampubolon 1978, p. 114.}
The unstable existence of many men during these years implied that the women had to mobilise resources and imagination to support themselves and their children. To this end, some unconventional methods were used. Toba women, for example, were often involved in the smuggling of goods that flourished because of Japanese restrictions on regional commerce.\(^{52}\) For Toba women in Medan, it must have been profitable to transfer food from Tapanuli to Medan, where the shortage of food was acute and prices high. Many women also thought that it was easier to support their families in Tapanuli than on the east coast and returned to their home villages. Another reason for returning to Tapanuli was that, when men were away from home, the situation for the women who remained was more insecure.\(^{53}\)

The exposed position of women is shown in the fact that some Toba girls and young women were forced to become prostitutes. In spite of the Christian Pietistic morals that the missionaries had conveyed to the Toba, there were during the colonial period brothels in the small towns in Tapanuli, though the prostitutes were mainly of Javanese origin.\(^{54}\) After 1942, there were examples of how young Toba women were promised a study trip to Japan, but instead ended up as prostitutes.\(^{55}\) In Tanah Alas in South Aceh, Toba women were brought to the internment camp for Dutch citizens at Lawe Sigala and were forced to cater for the sexual needs of Japanese soldiers.\(^{56}\)

These and other sufferings implied that the image of the Japanese “liberators” quickly changed and, as one Toba source puts it, “The older brother had already faded to become the cruel brother.”\(^{57}\)

The social consequences for the Toba Batak community in Medan

Toba in Medan responded quickly to the expansion of the Japanese forces in the Pacific. Already on 8 December 1941, the day after Japanese forces had raided Pearl Harbour, almost all the women and children travelled from Medan to

\(^{52}\) Nyhus 1987, p. 90.
\(^{53}\) Tampubolon 1978, p. 115.
\(^{54}\) Adam 1993, pp. 324f.
\(^{55}\) Panggilan untuk Berbuah 1977, p. 31. The writer uses the euphemism that the girls “... ended up in the valley of humiliation” (Ind. “... diperlakukan ke dalam lembah kehinaan.”).
\(^{56}\) Adam 1993, p. 325. Adam’s text implies that these women were taken from the local Toba population in Tanah Alas, not from further away.
\(^{57}\) Ind. “Saudara tua sudah luntur menjadi suadara Kejam.” Tampubolon 1978, p. 111. The above-mentioned examples refer exclusively to Toba experiences during the Japanese period but do not imply that the Toba suffered more than other Indonesians.
Tapanuli. The men remained in the city for the time being.\textsuperscript{58} The reason why the men remained was that they did not want to leave their work at such short notice.\textsuperscript{59} The attack on Pearl Harbour had obviously sent the message that Japan wanted to expand in the region and that a war had begun. The development was enough to make the Toba fear for the future and decide that the women and children should travel back home. They thought that it was safer for them there and easier to make a living in the countryside with one's relatives in a time of war. The people in the villages were not always pleased that their relatives, who had had a good income in Medan, had come back home to demand a share of the meagre resources. Such sentiments could lead to conflict.\textsuperscript{60}

Most Toba men left for Tapanuli after the bombing of Belawan in January 1942.\textsuperscript{61} W. Lumbantobing, who had been working in Belawan, told his Dutch employer that he wanted to go home and obtained his salary for the next three months.\textsuperscript{62} Another informant told me that he received two months' salary and then rode his bike all the way to Sidikalang, north-west of Lake Toba, where his brother lived.\textsuperscript{63} The fact that he and other men were willing to give up their employment shows that they had strong fears for their safety and thought that the colonial system, from which they had profited, was destined to fall apart. The same pattern of migration probably holds true of all the Batak groups that resided in Medan. The small Simalungun Batak group, for instance, is said to have moved outside town.\textsuperscript{64} Presumably they had acquired fields in the region or went back to their home villages.

Even though the image, conveyed by W. Lumbantobing, of a large-scale Toba exodus from Medan certainly holds true in a general sense, it needs to be modified. The exodus from Medan, particularly of Toba men, was not complete. W. Lumbantobing himself worked for a private company and such companies were shut down on the arrival of the new rulers. Toba employed there had to leave. Because, after the Japanese arrival, plantations functioned on a much smaller

\textsuperscript{58} Penatalaksanaan yang Baik 1984, p. 18. W. Lumbantobing, who is the source here, does not make an explicit connection with the events at Pearl Harbour. Even though he refers to his experience as a member of Huria Christen Batak in Medan, his statement about these events need not be interpreted as referring only to people from his own congregation. Lumbantobing dates the events one year too late. For instance, when he claims that the Japanese bombed the harbour of Belawan in January 1943, this should be January 1942. When he writes that the evacuation took place in 1942, the correct year is then 1941, because it is said to have taken place before the bombing of Belawan.

\textsuperscript{59} Interview, W. Lumbantobing.

\textsuperscript{60} Interview, W. Lumbantobing.

\textsuperscript{61} Interview, W. Lumbantobing.

\textsuperscript{62} Penatalaksanaan yang Baik 1984, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{63} Interview, S. Lumbantobing.

\textsuperscript{64} Girsang 1979, p. 7.
scale that before, most of the Toba in that sector also lost their employment. However, when the western personnel had left or been interned, some of their positions were filled by Indonesians.65 Even though the number of civil servants was certainly reduced, there must have been those who in this way obtained positions they had not had before, a development that would apply to some Toba who had previously worked in the Dutch administration. One example is T. S. Sihombing, the Toba minister in Medan, who worked at the Office for Religious Affairs.66 Another example is Saladin Sarumpaet. He had been head of two mission schools before 1941, when he moved to Medan with his family to take up a position as a government teacher. During the Japanese period, he worked as a teacher in Deli Tua near Medan.67 In September 1943, F. H. Sitompul was selected to become a member of a Japanese propaganda organisation.68 There were, in other words, still opportunities for a small group of Toba to continue to work as white-collar workers under Japanese auspices.

The massive Toba exodus from Medan meant that the community was reduced to a small number of people. The organisations, such as the voluntary associations, that they had built up in the previous decades ceased to exist, while the Toba Christian congregations reduced their activities to a minimum. It was only in the late 1940s that a large number of Toba thought that it was safe and profitable to move back to the city again.

The impact on congregational life

**Medan congregations under Japanese rule.** An important change that accompanied the establishment of Japanese authority on Sumatra was that all contacts with western Churches and missionary agencies came to an end. The flow of personnel and money was cut off and communication of any kind with the West was non-existent.69 Almost every western missionary who had worked in Tapanuli and the east coast was interned.70 Two exceptions were Alm and Åström, two Swedish Methodist missionaries, who were able to continue their work on Sumatra owing to the fact that

---

65 Liddle 1970, p. 46.
66 See the discussion on this topic later in this chapter.
68 The organisation was called Sumatora Minzoku Tyosakai, *Kita Sumatora Shimbun*, 17 September 2603 (1943).
69 Letters from this period are notably absent from the archives in Europe that I have visited.
70 At the time of the arrival of the Japanese forces, some Toba had got the impression that, even though Europeans in general would be interned, missionaries would be allowed to continue their work. I. S. Kijne to Zendingsconsulaat, 6 December 1947. In *Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra*. 
Sweden did not join in any military alliance during the war. Åström was working among the Chinese and Alm among the Toba. It is, however, uncertain what kind of contacts Alm had with Toba Methodists in Medan. Alm stayed on the region during the whole Japanese period, while Åström was killed for unknown reasons in Tebing Tinggi in 1942. Another exception was a group of Dutch Catholic sisters who escaped internment and continued to work in Medan.

The internment of missionaries had quite a large impact on the HKBP, because the remaining Dutch missionaries were in charge of, for instance, the education of clergy. The HKBP congregation in Medan was not directly affected by these changes, since no RMG missionary had been stationed there since 1934. For the Catholic Church, the absence of western missionaries was more serious, because the Catholic Church on Sumatra in 1942 had not ordained any indigenous clergy. The development implied that local Catholics had no opportunity to receive the Eucharist or to baptise children. In 1945, Catholic priests were able to return to Medan, but it was only in 1947 that a Catholic priest could enter Tapanuli again.

Another important change was that in the restructuring of the region to suit Japanese needs, the new rulers used the physical resources of the Churches. They needed buildings to use for lodging Japanese troops, for storage and for interrogation. To this end, they took over many churches, parish halls and other buildings owned by the Church organisations. In Pearaja-Tarutung, the Japanese administration took over the headquarters of the HKBP and the office had to move out to the countryside.

In Medan, the Catholic church was used as an office for the Kempetai, the Japanese military police. The Catholic school near the church became a prison.

---

71 Alm's unpublished autobiography, Alm n.d., does not reveal anything.
72 For a biography (in Swedish) of Åström, written by his wife, see Edborg-Åström 1951.
73 Muskens 1969, p. 317. The sisters belonged to the Sisters of Josef congregation whose main responsibility was education, but since no church schools were allowed by the Japanese, it is uncertain in what form they were able to continue their work. They were probably not allowed to leave Medan. Their convents in the Netherlands can probably provide more information about their activities during this period.
74 In 1943, a student from the region was ordained after his education in Padang on the west coast of Sumatra, but he never came to work on Sumatra. Bank 1983, p. 94. Bank does not say that this student was a Toba, though this was probably the case.
75 Arguably, there were indigenous Catholic priests in other parts of Indonesia who could have been sent there, but, because of the policy of isolation adhered to by the Japanese and the generally difficult situation for the Churches, it was in practice not possible.
76 See Chapter 7, section "The development of Toba Batak congregations".
77 Nyhus 1987, p. 130.
78 Panggilan dan Suruhan Alihi 1974, p. 68.
79 Sihombing 1965, p. 16.
for the more prominent European internees. Because a Toba Catholic became an official advisor to the Japanese in religious matters, it is likely that Toba Catholics managed to secure for themselves a place in which to worship. Regarding the Dutch churches, the Protestantsche Kerk was used as a dormitory for soldiers. The indigenous part of the congregation was instead able to hold services at the Gereformeerde Kerk. The HKBP congregation continued, at least initially, to use their church. But later the congregation had to find another place where they could worship. It is not clear for what purpose the Japanese used the HKBP church. It was partly damaged and after the war the congregation had to renovate the building. One may conclude that congregations that continued to function during the Japanese period in general had their churches used by the Japanese and that they had to find other places of worship.

This use of churches was probably not a general feature of Japanese rule in Indonesia. In Singapore, the headquarters of the 25th Army, it appears that no churches were taken for other purposes by the Japanese authorities. Perhaps Singapore provided better opportunities than Medan for storage and the lodging of soldiers. With regard to mosques, the Japanese Army does not seem to have taken them into possession. Such a gesture would have offended the religious majority in the area. The uprising in Aceh against Japanese rule in November 1942 probably also made them more cautious.

Except for the HKBP congregation, knowledge of other congregations in Medan is very scarce or non-existent. The implication is that these congregations ceased to function or had few activities. Hardly anything is known about the congregational life of Catholics and Methodists. On one occasion, the Kempetai questioned a Methodist minister. But to what ethnic group he belonged and

---

81 The employment of the Catholic Toba is discussed later in this chapter. Before 1942, Toba, Tamil and Chinese Catholics were separated in different congregations. It is unlikely that they held services together especially because there was no priest present who, by performing the sacraments, could have made brought them together.
82 Nyhus 1987, p. 130.
83 Jarkasi 1971.
84 T. S. Sihombing, the HKBP minister who replaced J. Sihombing in January 1943, has reported that the congregation had to display a Japanese flag on the roof of the church, a statement which implies that the church was used by the congregation at least until early 1943. Sihombing 1965, p. 16.
85 Nyhus 1987, p. 479, n. 31. The sources are silent as to where this new place of worship was situated.
87 The work on the Church history of Singapore that I have consulted only mentions that two churches were destroyed or damaged during the siege and invasion of the city. Sng 1980, p. 194.
88 Hamka, who certainly would have mentioned it in his autobiographic account, Hamka 1974, III, does not say anything on the subject. The same applies to Benda 1958 and Nyhus 1987.
89 Sihombing 1965, p. 16.
whether he was stationed in Medan is not known. As for the independent Churches, Huria Christen Batak had a minister, a certain Jona Sinaga, stationed in Medan.\textsuperscript{90} This points to some degree of activity. The Javanese Rev. Cokrosusilo, who had worked among Javanese Christians for the Gereformeerde congregations in Medan, helped Huria Christen Batak to educate teachers and clergy.\textsuperscript{91} It is not certain whether he was able to pursue these activities while he was living in Medan. The congregations of the smaller groups of Batak Christians ceased to function. Almost all the Simalungun Batak, for instance, moved out of town and no congregational life was needed.\textsuperscript{92}

Because the HKBP congregation was by far the largest, it is likely that at least some Toba from other congregations joined the services of the HKBP congregation, with which most of them were already acquainted.

\textit{The Rev. T. S. Sihombing and the development of the HKBP congregation.} When Japanese forces entered Medan in March 1942, Justin Sihombing was still the HKBP minister in Medan and he remained there until November 1942. In that month, Sihombing moved to Tarutung because he was elected Ephorus of the HKBP by the General Synod.\textsuperscript{93} According to Nyhus, “Sihombing took the position with extensive knowledge of the Church, a long period of practical experience and the respect of his co-workers.”\textsuperscript{94} The 14 years that he had worked in Medan, eight of them without the direct interference of European missionaries, certainly made up most of his “long period of practical experience” and contributed to give him the respect that caused the Church to elect him Ephorus.

T. S. Sihombing was now chosen to become the new clergyman in Medan and took up his new position in January 1943.\textsuperscript{95} Tarapul S. Sihombing was born in 1915 in a small village near Butar in the Silindung Valley. After studies at the HIS in Balige, he moved to the HIS in Narumonda in 1923. He had studied only for two years in Narumonda when a teacher who had studied in Solo was able to obtain a place for him at the Christian HIS in that city on Java. Sihombing later continued his studies at the MULO in the same city. In 1932, he started to study western languages in Jogyakarta, but in 1934 he entered the ecumenical theologi-
cal seminary in Bogor that had just been established.96 Together with two other Toba students, he graduated in 1940 and was ordained in Tapanuli the same year. Many members of the HKBP placed great hopes for the future in these young, Java-educated theologians. A Toba newspaper even compared them to Peter, John and James, the three most prominent apostles of Jesus.97

After ordination, Sihombing was stationed at Sipirok in the Angkola Batak area of South Tapanuli. From Sipirok, he also had responsibility for HKBP members living in West Sumatra. He was disappointed with this decision, because the congregation was small.98 He had certainly expected something different and more prestigious. When he replaced the newly elected Ephorus in Medan, he received a position that he obviously thought was more suited to his long education. His relatively advanced, theological education and long experience of living in the Toba diaspora were probably important factors that led the leadership to station him in Medan. It is likely that he also filled in J. Sihombing's position as Praeses of the District of Sumatra's East Coast, Dairi/Pakpak and Aceh.

The fact that the HKBP decided to send one of its "hopes for the future" to Medan indicates that the congregation was still functioning rather well. Medan had now become the seat of a Japanese governor, a fact that probably also influenced the choice of the well-educated T. S. Sihombing to defend the interests of the Church. Certainly Medan had been the seat of Dutch governors, but if the Dutch were perceived by the Toba as friendly or at least as neutral towards Christianity, the Japanese were often suspicious and questioned the loyalty of indigenous Christians.

T. S. Sihombing thought that it was very difficult to be responsible for his large working area.99 The Japanese policy of restricting communications between different parts of Sumatra must have made visits to Aceh particularly difficult. It is therefore not certain that he was able to visit Aceh at all during these years.100 Problems of communication must also have had the effect that it was difficult to uphold contacts with the HKBP headquarters in Tarutung.

With regard to other church workers, there was no teacher working in Medan from 1942 to 1950. Only a couple of elders were still active.101 J. Tampubolon,
who was a teacher in Medan at least until 1937, when he wrote the history of the
congregation, had obviously died or returned to Tapanuli.

Accommodating Japanese religious policies

Religion and politics: Japanese style

The single most important factor that determined the relation between religion
and politics in Japan was the cult of the Emperor. He was regarded as a divine
being who was descended from Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, and provided the
whole world with life and harmony.

The main ritual to demonstrate loyalty to the Emperor was the performance
of sekerei. This ritual was a bow of the head below the waist and was directed
either towards the Imperial Palace in Tokyo or towards the rising sun, a symbol
both of Japan as a nation and of the Emperor who incarnated it. The ritual
signified respect, reverence and adoration of the Emperor and the nation. The
Though some Christians in Japan raised objections to the religious elements in
the ideology of the Emperor, most Christians thought that sekerei was merely an
important civil ceremony.

Shinto, the national religion, had, since the end of the 19th century, been
separated into Sect Shinto, comprising the various Shinto schools, and State Shinto,
whose main function was to support the State. Sect Shinto was regarded as reli-
gious, but State Shinto was officially not regarded as a religion. Adherents of
other religions, in spite of the offerings and prayers conducted at the State Shinto
shrines, were free to regard their visits to the shrines as a patriotic duty to the
nation, not as a religious service. To attend State Shinto shrines could therefore
be made compulsory, for schoolchildren and members of the armed forces, with-
out formally violating the principle of religious freedom that was part of the
Meiji constitution. In the 1930s, the increasingly authoritarian rule in Japan im-
plied that the demands to demonstrate loyalty were enforced more rigorously. In
1936, both the Protestant Churches and Propaganda Fide in Rome, on behalf of

103 Sekerei in itself is not discussed as a problem for the Christians in Japan in the western literature
on Japanese Church history that I have consulted, Lee 1962 and Iglehart 1959.
104 In 1882, the division was accepted by the Japanese State. In 1900, they were separated into two
distinct offices at the Home Ministry: for State Shinto, the Bureau for Shinto Shrines and for all reli-
gions, including the Shinto sects, the Bureau for Religions. In 1913, the separation was further empha-
sised when the Bureau of Religions was moved to the Department of Education. Lee 1962, pp. 42f.
105 Iglehart 1959, p. 173.
the Catholic Church in Japan, declared that to attend the State shrines was a secular undertaking. According to the Catholic document, the visit to State Shinto shrines "had merely patriotic significance, namely, an indication of filial reverence towards the Imperial Family and to the heroes of the country."\textsuperscript{106}

In terms of the organisational structures of certain religious groups, the Japanese authorities made efforts to unite them. Therefore the Nippon Kirisuto Kyodan (Church of Christ in Japan), a united Protestant Church, was in 1940 formed on government orders. Protestant groups who did not accept the policy were dissolved as legal bodies and ministers were imprisoned.

When the Japanese forces expanded into Manchuria, Korea and Taiwan, many Shinto temples were built. Although it was mainly Japanese who visited them, local inhabitants also had to show their loyalty to Japan by attending worship there. One example is the last Manchu emperor of China, who had to attend the shrine as a sign of his "willingness to retain good relations with Japan."\textsuperscript{107} They probably thought that the cultural distance was not so great and that the local population could be expected to attend State Shinto shrines.

The Japanese leaders were, on the other hand, not only concerned to enforce Shinto. For two decades before their forces invaded Southeast Asia, they had, for instance, made efforts to approach and win support in the Muslim world. In the mid-1920s, journals and institutes were set up for the study of Islam and in the 1930s, efforts were made to promote Japan as the protector of Islam. To this end, people were sent to the Middle East to study and prepare for propaganda work. In Japanese propaganda, hopes were even held out for the conversion of the Emperor to Islam. The image of a Muslim worldempire centred on the Emperor-Caliph of Greater Japan was promoted. In 1938, an impressive mosque was inaugurated in Tokyo in the presence of prominent Muslim guests. At the time there were only 100 Muslims in Japan. In September 1939, the Japanese Islamic Association invited Muslim leaders to be present during an Islamic Exhibition. The expenses of the delegations were paid by the hosts. They also arranged a conference that constituted itself as the first World Islamic Conference.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106}Lee 1962, pp. 134f.
\textsuperscript{107}Hardacre 1989, p. 95. In this section, entitled "Shines in the colonies", Hardacre does not provide any example from Southeast Asia. Because she does not specify what she means by "colonies", she gives the impression that the duty to attend Shinto shrines was a general feature in all the areas controlled by Japan up to 1945. The discussion below shows that this evaluation is clearly wrong.
\textsuperscript{108}Benda 1958, pp. 1f.
In Southeast Asia, the Japanese authorities generally tried to establish good relations with the largest religious communities. In the Philippines, for instance, they made efforts to win the confidence of the Catholics.\textsuperscript{109}

Patterns of administrative control

On Sumatra, the Japanese authorities made efforts to cultivate relations with religious leaders and to organise the existing religious bodies to support their cause. On one occasion during the first months of Japanese rule, Governor Makagawa gathered together several religious leaders. There were five Muslims and two Christians present, including a Toba Protestant minister, presumably Justin Sihombing. The image provided by one of the Muslim participants is of a formal but friendly meeting, where various things were discussed. A Muslim, for instance, suggested that \textit{keirei}, a mandatory bow to Japanese soldiers, could be modified and reduced to a nod of the head, but the suggestion was rejected. It was more important that one Muslim leader came forward and said that the people present were leaders of various religious groups, including Muhamadiyah and Washliyah, and asked if these organisations were to be allowed to continue to hold meetings and other activities. The Governor said that they would be able to do so.\textsuperscript{110} The assurance that religious organisations would be able to continue to function was certainly intended to gain the confidence of the religious leaders for the moment. Makagawa seems to have examined local conditions and planned policies. To assure the religious leaders that the religious organisations would continue to function was a means of inducing them to declare their loyalty to the Japanese cause. It was only when the "period of study" was over that the harsh realities of Japanese rule became evident. Religious organisations were often forbidden to hold meetings and some of them, such as the HKBP youth organisation, were prohibited.\textsuperscript{111} The only Christian organisation that flourished under Japanese rule was the Parguruan Saksi ni Kristus (Institute for the Witness of Christ), an institute for the education of lay evangelists initiated within the Simalungun Batak branch of the HKBP. After graduation, students were sent out to the villages to evangelise. The Institute was initiated in late 1942 by the Simalungun Batak leader, Wismar Saragih. He had been inspired by the work of the Japanese Christian social reformer, Kagawa, to reach poor people in Japan with the Christian message. In the face of Japanese suspicion, the Christian Simalungun Batak could always safeguard their initiative by referring to their inspiration from Japan.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Nyhus 1987, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{110} A description of the meeting is given in Hamka 1974, III, p. 56.


\textsuperscript{112} Saragih 1979, pp. 116ff.
In July 1942, Governor Makagawa was replaced by Nakashima. The new governor started to establish more formal contacts with religious leaders. From the Muslim leaders with whom he had already established contact, Nakashima requested the names of persons who could represent the Christians on the east coast. The suggested individuals were "a Batak Protestant minister and a Roman Catholic priest." The Protestant minister was probably Justin Sihombing. Because there were no Catholic priests in Medan at the time, the Catholic representative must have been a lay person, possibly the same Toba from the Hutauruk marga who was later employed by the Office of Religious Affairs in Medan.

During the last months of 1944, when the allies were making steady progress against the Japanese forces in the Pacific, the Japanese administration on Sumatra established offices of religious affairs and religious councils.

On Sumatra, religious councils were established in 1944 with a centre in Bukittinggi, but with regional branches in cities and towns such as Medan, Tarutung and Padang Sidempuan. They all had Indonesian chairmen. There are no indications that a council was initiated on the east coast. Instead, an Office for Religious Affairs was set up in 1944. At that time, a similar Office had been in existence in Java since March 1942. Therefore it seems that the 25th Army was, also in this respect, reluctant and slow to establish representative bodies. The regional Muhammadiyah leader Hamka played an important role in initiating an office on the east coast of Sumatra. The reasons were his travels to Java and his good relations with the Governor in Medan. In January

---

114 Hamka quoted by Nyhus 1987, p. 129.
115 See the discussion on this office below.
116 Nyhus 1987, p. 177, n. 73.
117 The office was dominated by Japanese officials, among them, a group of six Japanese who presented themselves as Muslims. To the Office, five Indonesians were also appointed. Benda 1958, p. 111, p. 233, n. 26. None of the Indonesian names mentioned by Benda can be identified as Christians and it appears that the Office was set up exclusively to relate to the Muslim community. In October the next year, when Japanese policies changed because of the unfavourable course of the Pacific war, the Office was re-organised to incorporate more Indonesian interests. H. Jayadiningrat, an eminent, western-trained, Islamic scholar who in 1920 had been appointed as Assistant Advisor on Native Affairs by the Dutch administration, became head of the Office. Benda 1958, pp. 126, 223, n. 59. In each district on Java, a local religious office was also established. Hamka 1974, III, p. 125. These initiatives show that efforts were being made to make Indonesians feel that they were involved in the affairs pertaining to religion.
118 It is certainly a general feature of autobiographies to stress the importance of the writer and it is possible that he overstated his case. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that Hamka could have had such an influence on the Governor. The relatively close relationship between them is demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that Nakashima, admittedly according to Hamka himself, after the capitulation of Japan visited Hamka's home and thanked him for their co-operation by giving him a large sum of money and some high-quality batik. Hamka 1974, III, p. 193.
1944, he visited Jakarta. Upon his return to Medan, he informed the Governor that the Advisory Council on Religion (Pusat Penasehat Agama) on Java had recently had an Indonesian as its highest official. He also provided the Governor with the statutes and regulations of these organisations. Hamka had most likely personal contact with the people working at the office in Jakarta.

In June 1944, Hamka’s initiative bore fruit and an Office for Religious Affairs was set up in Medan. The headquarters in Bukittinggi sent a Japanese official, Usugane, to Medan to lead the work. The Governor is said to have introduced Usugane with the statement that he was “... an expert in Islam who also understood Christianity.” It is not known what formal education he had, but it is possible that, before his arrival in Indonesia, he had taken courses in Islamic studies in Japan.

According to the Governor, it was not appropriate for an Indonesian to lead the office, as was the case on Java, because there were in fact two religions on the east coast. Hamka was disappointed. He had expected that, because of his relation to the Governor and the fact that he had initiated the process that led up the founding of the Office, he would become the head of the Office. In resignation, he said that it was a wise decision, because Christians had also joined in the struggle to help Japan. The Governor responded that he did not agree and that the Muslims were more helpful to Japan. According to him, “The Christians prefer the Dutch, but the Kingdom of Japan has to be fair and not leave the Christians behind.”

The staff at the Office included T. S. Sihombing, the head of the Protestant section and a Toba from the Hutauruk marga who was head of the Catholic section. Two other Christian employees were a Javanese from the Gereformeerde Church and another Catholic. There were also a number of Muslims working at the Office. Initially, no Muslims from the traditionalist group were employed. But when the defeat of Japan was drawing nearer, two Muslim representatives of the sultans were also included in the staff. The composition of the personnel

---

119 Hamka 1974, III, p. 117.
120 Hamka 1974, III, p. 125.
121 That the Office was founded that month is stated by Nyhus 1987, p. 478.
123 Nyhus gives the impression that Hamka actually defended Christians from Japanese accusations of being lackeys of the western powers. Nyhus 1987, p. 479. In fact, he was only disappointed and gave a polite reply to the presentation of the Governor.
125 Hamka 1974, III, p. 130.
126 Nyhus 1987, p. 478, n. 29. The ethnic origin of the first official is not explicitly mentioned. But since the Gereformeerde congregation in Medan in the 1930s had been active among Christian Javanese on the east coast, he was almost certainly Javanese.
127 Hamka 1974, III, p. 130.
suggests that Christians, in relation to their numerical size, had in fact obtained a rather strong position *vis-à-vis* the Muslims. The situation could, of course, be attributed to the fact that the Toba were generally well educated and that T. S. Sihombing had co-operated well with the Japanese authorities.

It seems then that the Japanese in this respect adapted their policies to the reasonably strong Christian minority on the east coast. Presumably it was thought that an Indonesian Muslim head of the Office would favour his religious community. The line of action then seems to be part of the policy "not to leave the Christians behind".

In view of the fact that Christians were a small minority on the east coast, Nyhus has, on the other hand, argued that the conflict between modernist and traditionalist Muslims was an equally strong motivation to appoint a Japanese to this position. The fact that no Muslim from the traditionalist camp initially came to work at the Office makes this claim questionable. If the above-mentioned conflict was an important reason why only a Japanese could head the Office, it is difficult to account for the fact that the Japanese did not bear this in mind when they recruited personnel for the same Office. Only when the war situation of the Japanese had become desperate did they feel the need to complete the Office with individuals representing the sultans.

Regarding the activities of the office, not much is known. Once each month, the office held a large meeting with religious leaders, but it was only matters pertaining to the war that were discussed. Formally, the Office had as its purpose "to gather information on Islam and Christianity, to advance the faiths long held in East Sumatra and to make contact with the public." According to Sihombing it was, on the other hand, obvious that the motivation of the Japanese administration in establishing the office was "... that religion ... would become a means whereby they could implement their political plans ...".

What then was the importance of the fact that the local HKBP minister was an official at the Office of Religious Affairs? From the perspective of the HKBP leadership, the appointment of T. S. Sihombing must have been comforting, since

---

128 Nyhus 1987, p. 479.
129 According to Hamka the only exception was a conflict between the Sultan of Deli and Muhammadiyah about the plans of the reformist organisation to build a mosque in Rampah on the Sultan's territory. Hamka 1974, III, p. 131. Nyhus 1987, p. 429, n. 32. For a detailed account of the conflict, see Hamka 1974, III, pp. 150-167.
130 Quotation given by Nyhus 1987, p. 479.
131 "... asa boi ugapmo ... gabe ulaula laho pasauton politikna ...". Sihombing 1965, p. 15. Nyhus also says that the main function of the Council was to drum up support for the war. Nyhus 1987, p. 479.
it made sure that they had a person stationed in the Governor’s administration. They also sent a letter to the Governor to thank him for the appointment. In view of the problems of communication at the time it is, however, likely that Sihombing was trusted with being able to act on his own initiative in relation to the Japanese authorities. Sihombing also managed to obtain the respect of the local Muslim leaders. He is described by Hamka, for instance, as a prominent Christian “with a wide knowledge” (Ind. yang luas faham).

In spite of the fact that he was well aware of the political agenda of the Japanese authorities, Sihombing still thought that his position was worth while. In the words of the Toba minister:

At that time I was appointed to become advisor for Christianity and member of Syu Sangi kai. Because I held these two positions, there were many positive effects for our Church, and many of their plans that were not good were abolished.

This statement should partly be evaluated as a way of defending his co-operation with the Japanese authorities against those who might have been critical of Indonesians “collaborating with fascists”. On the other hand, it is likely that Sihombing genuinely felt that his participation was beneficial for the Church. For instance, he mentions that he was able to arrange an alternative place of worship after the HKBP church had been claimed by the Japanese Army. Several other examples will be referred to in the rest of this chapter. The Office was, in other words, both a tool of Japanese propaganda and, to some extent, a forum where local religious leaders could inform the Japanese authorities about local attitudes and negotiate with them about how to implement religious policies.

In order to gain a clearer picture of Japanese attempts to organise religious organisations, Christian ones in particular, it is important to compare them with developments in the rest of the archipelago. In the area administered by the Japanese Navy, federations of Christian organisations were set up in the Christian

---

132 Ketua Besar HKBP A. Nainggolan to Gunseisibu Sumatera Timur, Pearaja Tarutung 8 July 2604 (1944). HKBP archives. The letter ends with a wish that Japan may win the war.
133 Hamka 1974, III, p. 130.
134 “Di tingki i dipabantu bai dibasa dekik Kristen dohot e nggona Syu Sangi Kai. Manha na hudohoni na dua ulanu i gabe godang do pangkorhona n na positip tu Huriata, jala godangdo sundat tahanasida na so denggan i.” Sihombing 1965, p. 16. The positive evaluation of Sihombing’s positions in Japanese organisations is repeated in Sejarah Sudirman 1986, p. 32, but it is possible that the original source of this judgement was Sihombing himself.
strongholds of Ambon and in South and North Sulawesi. A Christian Council for the whole of Sulawesi was also formed that included both Catholics and Protestants. On Borneo, an inter-religious council was formed that included four Muslims, three Protestants and three Catholic Christians. The council was to some extent free to work independently of Japanese officials, although it is difficult to assess its nature and scope. In Southeast Borneo, a Christian Council was formed among the Christian Dayak. Muslim councils called Jamiah Islamiyah were also set up in these areas, except for North Sulawesi, where the Christian Minahassa were dominant.

On Java, where the dominant religion was Islam but a Christian minority was rather influential, the Japanese 16th Army initially, as part of the so-called 3A Programme, tried to merge all Muslim organisations into one. In late 1942, when the 3A Programme was abolished, no unitary Muslim organisation was founded. Muslim religious organisations were able to continue as before, while the Japanese authorities gradually suppressed the Muslim political parties. Instead, special efforts were made to win the local Muslim leaders in the villages for their cause.

As part of the 3A Programme, Christian leaders were also approached and in June 1942, the Japanese administration held a meeting with them and a committee was formed to implement unity among the Christians. The Angkola Batak Amir Sjarifuddin, a member of the HKBP congregation in Jakarta and the future...
Socialist Prime Minister of Indonesia, was an influential leader of the committee. In September, an organisation for Christians was founded and this organisation established an office in Jakarta. Sjarifuddin was initially the leader of this movement to unite the Churches, but soon had to leave this post. During the Dutch colonial period, he had been active in the ecumenical Student Christian Movement on Java, which was an important forum for Christian nationalists. But, just before the arrival of Japanese troops, he accepted a sum of money from a Dutch official to set up an underground, anti-Japanese, resistance movement. The Kempeita penetrated the organisation and in January 1943, he and 53 of his group were arrested. Several of his lieutenants were executed, but after the intercession of Sukarno and Hatta, Sjarifuddin himself was not executed but sentenced to life imprisonment. It is uncertain how Sjarifuddin’s two roles as underground political activist and Japanese-sponsored ecumenist were related to each other. The historians Benda and Ricklefs only deal with one role each.

After the demise of Sjarifuddin, his leadership in the Japanese organisation was taken over by a Toba, a certain Rufinus Lumbantobing, who worked as a government employee. At least in Jakarta, Lumbantobing is reported to have initiated services in which both mainline Protestants and Pentecostals participated.

In Singapore, which, like Sumatra, was administered by the 25th Army, Christian meetings were forbidden during the first six months of the occupation, but later these restrictions were abolished. Preaching was still forbidden, however, until the end of the war. In Singapore, the Federation of Christian Churches was initiated in June 1942 by L. Wilson, the Anglican Bishop of Singapore. He

---

144 For instance, it leads Ricklefs to state that Sjarifuddin “... refused to collaborate with the Japanese ...”, Ricklefs 1981, p. 206. The statement is truly false in the sense that he was engaged in a Japanese-sponsored effort to unite the Churches. That his ecumenical engagement was sincere is shown by the fact that, during the last stage of the Dutch era, he was a recognised ecumenical leader. Benda 1958, p. 234, n. 27. On the other hand, it is likely that he partly used his position as a cover-up, since this enabled him to travel to different regions of Java and there possibly to organise anti-Japanese resistance. It may also be suggested that some of his contacts within the Churches were part of his underground work.
145 Benda 1958, p. 234, n. 27. Bruin 1982, p. 136. Benda says that R. Lumbantobing was a government employee, while another source claims that he was a minister, HKBP Kernolong 1986, p. 16. No clergyman with that name is known to have worked for the HKBP congregation in Jakarta. He might have worked for the independent Punguan Kristen Batak in the city. Ministers of the independent churches were not at that time employed full-time. R. Lumbantobing could therefore have worked for the Japanese administration at the same time as he was serving his Church.
146 HKBP Kernolong 1986, p. 16.
147 Sng does not say whether all religious services were banned or only Christian worship.
148 Teaching in Sunday schools was not regarded as preaching and was therefore allowed. Sng 1980, p. 194.
was allowed to remain in his post for the first 13 months of Japanese authority. The ultimate goal of the organisation was to unite the Churches, possibly over the whole Malacca peninsula.\textsuperscript{149}

Initially, the Federation had support from Japanese officials, especially from the local director for education and religion, who was himself a devout Anglican. To eliminate the risk of the organisation being suspected of being anti-Japanese, they invited friendly Japanese officials to meetings.\textsuperscript{150} The Federation then seems to have worked relatively independently of the Japanese authorities and was not a mere puppet organisation. By the end of the war, the Federation had become strong and eventually the Japanese authorities decided to abolish all Church organisations, including the Federation, and allowed only individual congregations to remain.\textsuperscript{151}

In Singapore and Malaya, the policies towards Christianity, and possibly other religions too, were markedly harsher than in areas occupied by the Navy and the 16th Army. The prohibition against preaching and the dissolution of all central Church organisations were unique to Singapore. The city was probably considered to be of such strategic importance that, at least initially and at the end of Japanese rule, harsher policies were thought to be needed. These policies did not spill over into Sumatra, at least not to the east coast and Tapanuli.

It does not appear that the various councils and federations that the Japanese authorities set up represent efforts to form equivalents of the Japanese Kyodan. Christian Churches were not merged. The organisations were mainly instruments to promote united Christian support for the Japanese cause. Had Japan been able to retain its power over the Archipelago, it is, on the other hand, possible that the organisations that they set up would have developed into unitary church bodies.

In many of these examples, Japanese Christians were involved. Most of them were young theological students. They could occasionally play a monitoring role and, for instance, intercede on behalf of local Christians to soften stiff Japanese regulations. On the other hand, some became only propagandists for the Japanese cause and did not gain any respect from local Christians.\textsuperscript{152} The Japanese Christians who were sent to North Sumatra seem to have been too blatant propa-

\textsuperscript{149} A quotation from Wilson shows that the plans included the churches in Malaya. Sng 1980, p. 195. Sng limits his discussion to the churches in Singapore and does not say whether the wider plans were ever realised or what effect the co-operation had on the churches and congregations in Malaya.

\textsuperscript{150} Sng 1980, pp. 195f.

\textsuperscript{151} The only organisation that could continue to exist was the United Choir. Sng 1980, pp. 195f. Sng does not indicate when it took place, but I assume that it was at the very end of Japanese rule in Singapore.

\textsuperscript{152} Iglehart 1959, p. 247.
gandists for the cause of Japan to be able to foster any kind of mutual relations with the local Christians.\textsuperscript{153} Christians sent by the Japanese authorities seem to have been more frequent in the area administered by the Navy and the available examples of positive relations all come from that area.\textsuperscript{154}

From these cases, it appears that there was no Japanese uniform policy, in Indonesia as a whole and within the three administrative units. Local conditions were so diverse that the Japanese authorities thought that it was best to adapt to them. In many cases, as in North Tapanuli, the administrative pattern reflected the religious majority of the population. But where important Christian minorities were found, as on Java and on the east coast of Sumatra, special efforts were made in order “not to leave the Christians behind”.

Securing the loyalty of Indonesian religious communities

During their expansion in Southeast Asia, the Japanese authorities required from their new subjects that they should be loyal to Japanese rule.\textsuperscript{155} In Indonesia the Muslim majority was of most interest. The efforts to court the Muslim world had already had some effect and a delegation of Indonesian Muslims had been present when the World Islamic Conference was formed in 1939. Some kind of sympathy for Japan had developed and Muslims who were critical of the colonial government were attracted to the anti-western rhetoric of Japan.\textsuperscript{156}

One would have expected that Christians, most of whom had contacts with western countries, would have had more to fear from a Japanese takeover. Before their arrival in Indonesia, however, the Japanese also made efforts to approach Christians. These efforts are demonstrated by a leaflet that was dropped over Java in February 1942. Leaflets with similar contents may have been dropped also over Sumatra.

The leaflet with the title “Important news” was written in Malay in the name of the Commander of the Japanese Navy.\textsuperscript{157} It was introduced with a slightly altered quotation from the Bible: “Truly this is now a time of battle, truly this is now a day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2.” The main content of the message was

\textsuperscript{153} Nyhus 1987, p. 179. One example is the Rev. Syo, who was placed in Tarutung at the propaganda office and often made political interpretations of the Bible to support the cause of Japan. Nyhus 1987, pp. 472f.

\textsuperscript{154} Nyhus 1987, p. 472, n. 12, p. 473, n. 15.

\textsuperscript{155} In this context, I shall consider only the relations with Muslims and Christians. I have no information how the Hindu Tamil community and the Chinese were treated in this respect.

\textsuperscript{156} Benda 1958, pp. 103ff.

\textsuperscript{157} I do not know why the Navy was involved in these activities, since it was the Army that had the task of occupying Java.
that Japan would not interfere with the freedom of religion and would support all
religious endeavours. Those who gave support to the Dutch would be sentenced
to death, but those who decided to support Japan would, as leaders of the people,
attain positions of power. The text ended with “Grace to all who love our Lord
Jesus Christ with an undying love, Ephesians 6:24.”

Like all promises of the kind, they were quickly forgotten when the Japanese
forces had established themselves on Sumatra and the need to control and regu­
late the life of the religious communities had become a reality.

Sometime during the first few months of the occupation, the Japanese mili­
tary in Medan arranged a meeting, at which Muslim and Christian leaders were
present. One of the Christian representatives was the Rev. J. Sihombing. At this
meeting, Muslims were asked if their religion did not teach them that it was the
duty of Muslims to kill non-Muslims and consequently that they should kill the
Japanese. To this challenge, the Muslim representatives responded that it was only
a small sect among them that held this belief.158

When the loyalty of the Christians was questioned, Sihombing answered
that “Christians were to be subject to the government.”159 Sihombing’s line of
reasoning was clearly based on Romans 13, which stresses the obligation of Chris­
tians to be obedient to the governing authorities, who would not harm those who
do right.160 The text has in history often been used by Christians to declare their
loyalty to the government and was used by the RMG for the same purpose.161

On the other hand, after he had become Ephorus, Sihombing showed that
“to be subject to the government” did not mean submission. Although he partici­

158 It is not clear what theological arguments Muslims used to formulate their loyalty to the rulers.
Traditionalist Muslims could simply claim that they obeyed the sultans, who did not oppose the
Japanese. At the outset, it seemed to be a more difficult task for reformist Muslims to theologically
justify their loyalty to Japan. The only instance at which such an argument was hinted at was when
the reformist leader Hamka answered the questions of the Japanese governor regarding a Muslim
rebellion in Aceh. The governor asked if it was the goal of all Muslims to found an Islamic State.
Hamka answered that it was indeed part of the teachings of the Prophet to do so but that there
were conditions and that it depended on the situation. Hamka 1974, III, p. 68. I do not know what
these conditions were, according to Hamka, but his statement implies that the time and conditions
for such an Islamic State were not present. Muslims should therefore remain loyal subjects to Ja­
pa­


160 In the Holy Bible, New International Version, Romans 13, vv. 1-3b, read: ”Everyone must
submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has
established. The authorities have been instituted by God. Consequently, he who rebels against
authority is rebelling against what God had instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on
themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong.”

161 For the RMG use of Romans 13 in relation to the colonial authorities, see Nyhus 1987, pp. 62f.
pated in organisations sponsored by the Japanese administration and at the General Synod of the HKBP declared his loyalty to "the elder brother", he did not do so without reservations and protested in passive ways against them. It was probably difficult for Sihombing to reconcile Japanese rule with the image of rulers promoted by Paul. Sihombing probably interpreted Romans 13 as allowing for passive resistance to unrighteous rulers. He was, for instance, occasionally not present when meetings were held or came late to avoid performing sekerei. Furthermore, he did not allow the Japanese propaganda bureau to use churches for public meetings and never studied Japanese.\textsuperscript{162} The fact that many letters to Japanese officials that have been preserved in the HKBP archives are not signed by J. Sihombing also supports this evaluation. He obviously personally avoided contact with the Japanese when it was not imperative. Because of his stubborn unwillingness to co-operate, he seems to have been a special target when the Christians were accused of being actual or potential traitors to the Japanese cause.\textsuperscript{163}

Even though the situation under Japanese rule was very much different from that under Dutch rule, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Sihombing's attitude to the government followed the pattern shown by the RMG. The mission also declared that it was a humble servant of the Dutch government. At the same time, they often opposed both local officials and government efforts, for example, when they tried to regulate the mission schools. Because Sihombing was educated by the missionaries and had served the Church for a long time before 1942, he must have been familiar with this pattern.

Despite possible private reservations and passive resistance on behalf of religious leaders, the declarations of loyalty to Japan were honest, in the sense that there are, as far as I know, no examples from the east coast of organised resistance or protests against the occupation from religious leaders.

The rites of obeisance and their interpretation

Loyalty to the Japanese cause was frequently demonstrated by symbolic and ritual means. One symbolic way of showing loyalty to Japanese rule was naturally to display the Japanese flag. In general, it was requested that the Japanese flag with the rising sun should be held in high esteem as a "symbol of the greatness of the Japanese people in particular and the peoples of Greater East Asia in general."\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162} Nyhus 1987, p. 471.
\textsuperscript{163} Nyhus 1987, p. 468, n. 2.
\textsuperscript{164} Japanse bezetting 1960, p. 181, document no. 69.
A Dutch missionary claimed that, on the day the Japanese arrived at the HKBP headquarters, the Japanese flag had been raised, in spite of the fact that no such orders had come from Japanese officials. In Medan, the HKBP congregation had to display a Japanese flag from the rooftop. T. S. Sihombing considered this to be one of the "spiritual difficulties" they encountered. Presumably Sihombing thought that having the Japanese flag beside the cross on the roof implied a profanation of the Church. The religious dimensions in the Japanese state ideology could also have made him uneasy about the presence of the rising sun in this context.

In relation to Japanese soldiers, Indonesians were obliged to perform keirei, a bow from the waist. People who rode bikes were explicitly instructed to step down and bow if they passed a guard with a bayonet. A Toba woman who lived in Medan relates that Toba women on their way from church had to bow through 90 degrees and that those who only nodded their heads were told to perform keirei in a proper manner. The implication was that the Toba were not too keen to show respect to Japanese soldiers in the way that was prescribed.

The most important ritual that the Japanese authorities emphasised was sekerei. It was generally performed during official meetings under Japanese leadership and often took place in the morning. Indonesians who were employed as civil servants had to perform the ritual each morning. The character of such a meeting is shown by the instructions of the Japanese commander to "the Indonesian and Chinese civil servants" with regard to the celebration of the Emperor's birthday on 29 April 1943 in Medan, which included the following:

Civil servants in each department should elect one leader who will be responsible for seeing that all of them on 29 April at 9.30 a.m. Japanese time (7 a.m. local time) gather outside the office of the governor. When the Japanese flag is raised, all participants should stand and focus their eyes on the flag. Then they should bow through 90 degrees towards the Imperial Palace. The commander will then shout 'Tennō Heika banzai' (Long live His Majesty the Emperor) and participants will answer by shouting 'banzai', which will be followed by two more calls and responses of 'banzai'. From beginning to end, participants will stand bareheaded, except for Muslims, who are allowed to wear the Muslim head-cloth. During the ceremony, it is under no circumstances allowed to laugh or laugh at others.

The fact that Muslim participants were not obliged to remove their head-cloths showed that, apart from the obligatory performance of sekerei, the Japa-

166 Sihombing 1965, p. 15.
167 Japanse bezetting 1960, p. 183. Document no 71, a newspaper article from Jakarta, 22 April 1942. Benda claims that Indonesians were urged to bow to all Japanese citizens, Benda 1958, p. 240, n. 6, and this was probably how this and similar documents were interpreted locally.
170 Japanse bezetting 1960, p. 186, document no. 76. The text is a summary, not an exact quotation.
inese authorities did not want to disturb the religious sensibilities of the Muslim community. The fact that participants were not allowed to laugh and make fun of the ceremony makes it clear that the Japanese authorities had had some experiences at which the ceremony had been ridiculed. They were aware that the civil servants they employed did not always take these ceremonies too seriously.

To Muslims and Christians in North Sumatra, sekerei presented a problem, because it seemed that, by their performance of the ritual, the Emperor was being given a divine status. For Muslims, the ritual also had similarities with the Muslim ritual bow of prayer. The fact that many Japanese attributed a divine status to the Emperor sometimes became evident in their contacts with Indonesians. One example is a Japanese officer who, when confronted with the faith of two Indo-European Christians, told them that, as far as he was concerned, there was only one God and that was the Emperor of Japan.171

Japanese officials tried to adapt the image of the Emperor somewhat to suit Indonesian sentiments and used less conspicuous terms in which to address him. For most Japanese, it was no problem to regard the Emperor as divine, but to Christians and Muslims in Indonesia it was idolatry of the worst kind. One of the terms used in Indonesia to refer to the Emperor was "highest master", a term signifying high esteem but with no direct religious connotations to Indonesians. Sekerei was also said to be similar to the act of being faithful to one's parents and could be interpreted to mean "to give honour to the palace of the Emperor", a phrase used in a public gathering in Medan in 1944. If taken literally, the phrase would not have any religious meaning.172 With regard to sekerei, the Japanese authorities must have thought that Muslims and Christians in Indonesia should be able to accept the interpretation of sekerei as a necessary civil ceremony, in the same way as had been done in Japan. By taking part in the ceremony, Muslims or Christians did not compromise their religious faith.

In spite of these Japanese adaptations, many Indonesians remained suspicious of the actual meaning and purpose of sekerei. At one gathering with Japanese officials in Medan, a Muslim participant therefore suggested that they should only fold hands and not bow during the ritual. This suggested modification was not accepted.173 On Java, Muslim protests against sekerei were led in a heroic fashion by Hamka's father, Dr. Abdul Karim Amrullah. In October 1943, these actions and Japanese setbacks in the war in the Pacific led the Japanese administration to reconsider their

---

171 *Japanesegesture* 1960, p. 180. Apart from being a testimony to his personal belief in the divinity of the Emperor, the statement probably also implied that the officer was telling the Indo-Europeans that their faith might conflict with their loyalty to Japan.


position on sekerei. Even though Muslim leaders could not hope for a complete victory in this matter, they persuaded the Japanese to free participants at Muslim religious meetings from the duty. Benda does not discuss the issue explicitly, but it is likely that the above-mentioned change in Japanese policy on Java did not involve the duty of Muslims to perform sekerei on other occasions.

At the first public sekerei in Medan in April 1942, Muslims were assured in writing that it was not the same as the bow of worship. After this declaration, local Muslim leaders felt that to perform the ceremony would break no Muslim law.

For sekerei, the Toba used the word marsomba. This referred to worship, both Christian and in traditional religion. Among the Toba many consequently interpreted sekerei as a religious ceremony. J. Sihombing was of the opinion that the Japanese made the Emperor equal to God, and some Toba even identified the ritual with traditional religion. Officials in the Japanese administration, who regularly had to perform sekerei, had to try to solve the problem. Some tried to keep a “mental reservation” during the ceremony, while others accepted the Japanese suggestion that the ceremony was purely a civil matter of showing honour to the Emperor and the Japanese nation.

The Toba whom I have interviewed about the Japanese period were generally of the opinion that, although Japanese were rude, they were not acting as enemies of Christianity, a statement that implies that sekerei was not interpreted as idolatry. T. S. Sihombing in Medan also seems to have regarded it as a civil ceremony. To perform sekerei is, for instance, not included when he briefly refers to the “spiritual hardships” (Bat. porsuk ngolu partondion or tekanan ngolu partondion) that Christians had to confront during the period. Sekerei is not mentioned at all in Sihombing’s autobiography and was very likely not regarded as a problem.

The negative attitude of most Toba to the ceremony can also be explained in cultural terms. Because of the relative stress on equality in Toba society, the bow

---

175 Nyhus 1987, pp. 134ff.
177 Warneck translates marsomba (=marsumba) as “to worship” (anbete) without any specific reference to either Christianity or traditional religion. Warneck 1906, p. 192. Nyhus only highlights the Christian use of the term. Nyhus 1987, pp. 134ff.
179 Nyhus 1987, pp. 35ff.
180 Sihombing 1965, p. 15.
181 A counter-argument would be that he omitted any reference to the ritual because of his bad conscience about participating. The argument is, after all, not too convincing. Everyone knew that to perform sekerei was forced to a large extent and that people therefore could not really be blamed for taking part.
from the waist was considered to be humiliating. Sekerei was therefore not a sign of respect but of submission and was therefore not liked.\textsuperscript{182} It is safe to assume that the same attitude was behind the unwillingness of the Toba women mentioned above to perform keirei in front of Japanese soldiers.\textsuperscript{183}

With regard to Shinto, the Japanese naturally built Shinto shrines for their needs. But, compared with sekerei, which was an obligatory ingredient in any official meeting, there are very few instances to show that the Japanese authorities tried to impose the Japanese State religion on their new “little brothers” in North Sumatra.

There is one example from the end of the war when a Japanese officer ordered members of the political advisory body (Syu Sangi Kai), among them, J. Sihombing, to attend a Shinto shrine in Sibolga the next day. Their attendance would help Japan to gain victory in the war. J. Sihombing overslept and missed the ceremony.\textsuperscript{184} It is, however, likely that the other Christian members of the Council attended.

Another example was when the Japanese leader of the religious office in Medan, Usugane, suggested to T. S. Sihombing that “the people, and especially the civil servants, should go to the Japanese Temple on Jalan Mangga.”\textsuperscript{185} Jalan Mangga was situated near the present Jalan Diponegoro, not far from the HKBP church. Visits to the Shinto shrine should be made on Sundays before attending Christian worship. When Sihombing objected to the proposal, Usugane did not pursue the matter.\textsuperscript{186} Probably with reference to this episode, T. S. Sihombing thought that Usugane was “a moderate person who did not try to force his way.”\textsuperscript{187}

The Japanese official probably expected Christians in Indonesia to adopt the same attitude to the ritual as Christians in Japan had done. His intention was to suggest a practical way for Christians to show their loyalty to the Japanese cause and possibly to learn more about Japanese culture. The inclusion of civil servants in Sihombing’s text indicates that the suggestion was primarily aimed at Toba civil servants and possibly at all civil servants employed by the Japanese administration. Maybe the Japanese official thought that their work for Japan would make them prone to more cultural interaction with the Japanese and more eager to demonstrate loyalty.

\textsuperscript{182} Nyhus 1978, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{183} Benda is quite correct that keirei and sekerei (for analytical purposes) should not be confused with one another. Benda 1958, p. 240, n. 6. On the other hand, Indonesians probably saw parallels between them and did not distinguish too much between the two. In both cases, the ritual involved a bow from the waist and signified loyalty to Japanese rule.
\textsuperscript{184} Nyhus 1987, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{185} “... dijji do natorop i lumobi pegawai asa laho tu inganan panombaon ni Jepang na di J Mangga.” Sihombing 1965, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{186} Nyhus 1987, pp. 137f.
\textsuperscript{187} Nyhus 1987, p. 478, n. 28. The quotation is from an interview with T. S. Sihombing.
To T. S. Sihombing, Usugane's suggestion represented a "spiritual test" and must have been interpreted it as an invitation to idolatry. The fact that the Japanese official did not pursue the matter further shows that the local administration did not want to employ force to make people attend the State Shinto shrines.

The soft approach to the need to enforce State Shinto can probably be attributed to the perceived cultural distance between Japan and Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, there was no such common Confucian heritage to exploit. The Japanese generally regarded themselves as superior to the local inhabitants in the colonies, but even more so in relation to the "backward" peoples in South-east Asia. Another aspect that could also be taken into account is that the peoples of Southeast Asia were newcomers within the orbit of Japanese colonialism. They had ended up there only when the war had started on a large scale. The Japanese therefore did not have as much time and as many resources to organise these areas as they might have wanted, had they not been fighting a war at the same time.

The difference between the implementation of sekerei and Shinto rituals in North Sumatra, and possibly in Indonesia as a whole, therefore seems to have been that the former was regarded as a necessary sign of loyalty, almost regardless of the interpretations of the local population. Shinto was regarded as too removed from the culture of Indonesia and as too advanced.

The issue of holy days

I have already mentioned that Japanese rule implied changes in the reckoning of time. Also the weekly free day was generally changed from Sunday to Friday. This was obviously a concession to the Muslim majority in Indonesia. In North Tapanuli, the decision was never implemented in practice, although the highest Japanese official in Tarutung once announced that Friday would replace Sunday also in North Tapanuli. Nyhus claims that it was only in Medan that Friday

---

188 Beasley 1987, p. 244.
189 Although Beasley does not in this respect compare Southeast and Northeast Asia, it is the likely implication of his discussion. Beasley 1987, pp. 244ff. A Burmese political leader, for instance, claimed that "few people were mentally so race-bound ... and in consequence so totally incapable of understanding others or of making themselves understood by others." Beasley 1987, p. 245. For a similar point, see Benda 1958, p. 122.
190 Beasley 1987, p. 233.
191 Saragih 1979, p. 115.
192 Nyhus 1987, p. 356, n. 7. Nyhus does not indicate whether it implied that Japanese offices were closed on Sundays and consequently that the Toba employed there had the day off.
replaced Sunday as the free day of the week. But it seems that this policy was in fact implemented even on the east coast and in Simalungun.

This policy presented a problem to the Toba, who had come to accept Sunday as the Christian continuation of the Jewish Sabbath, a day that should be devoted to spiritual thought and deeds and not to activities considered as work. I do not know how successful the RMG was with regard to the peasants, who anyway would have to work, for example, when the time was right for harvest. It is likely that the mission was more successful among the educated and urban Toba. As a visitor from northern Europe I have noted that many Toba are more rigid than at least northern European Christians in abstaining from what is considered work on Sundays. The Toba who can afford to have housekeepers therefore often employ Muslims, because they can work on Sundays and have their day off on Fridays.

In Medan, the problem was solved by allowing the Toba to attend worship on Sunday mornings before going to work. This arrangement should be regarded as a compromise. The Japanese realised that they would run the risk of estranging the Christian community, had they forbidden them to attend worship on Sunday morning. On the other hand, the Japanese had to have civil servants working in offices also on Sundays. The Toba would therefore have to work, in spite of its being the Sabbath.

Regarding public holidays, the Japanese administration made adaptations to customs in Indonesia. The public holidays announced in Jakarta in 1942 included, except for Japanese holidays and the Chinese New Year, five important Muslim holidays, such as the celebrations at the end of Ramadan (Hari Raya) and Muhammad's birthday. No Christian holiday was awarded the same status.

Little is known about how these regulations published in Jakarta were implemented outside Java. In Tarutung, the Toba celebrated Christmas under Japanese auspices. But it is uncertain whether this implied that Christmas was announced as a public holiday locally in North Tapanuli. One can assume that, in this region with a majority of Christians, the local Japanese authorities allowed them to be free to celebrate one of the most important Christian holidays.

---

194 In Nyhus' text, it appears as if the sources he refers to in fact contrasted the situation in Medan with the situation in North Tapanuli, not with the rest of East Sumatra. The fact that Saragih refers to this change as a problem for Christians in Simalungun, Saragih 1979, p. 115, means that Friday probably became the weekly free day on the rest of East Sumatra too.
196 Japanse bezetting 1960, p. 189, document no. 75.
197 These celebrations had the form of a (forced) ecumenical service at the HKBP headquarters. Panggilan dan Suruhan Allah 1974, p. 68.
In Medan, T. S. Sihombing on one occasion obtained permission for Christian office-workers to take a day off to celebrate Pentecost. Permission was given only after a lengthy discussion, in which the Japanese official had to be convinced that Pentecost was an important Christian celebration.\textsuperscript{198} Sihombing does not mention that he had to apply for permission to celebrate other Christian holy days. Maybe Christians were free to take part in, for example, Easter celebrations.

From these examples, one cannot safely assess Japanese policy in general. But one can suggest that, even though they followed their general principle of adapting more to Muslim than to Christian traditions, they made local adaptations according to the religious majority in a specific area. With regard to the east coast, it seems that the Toba had to rely on the bargaining power of the local HKBP clergy to enable them to take a day off for an important celebration, a problem the Muslims did not have.

Christianity as “a religion of the West”

Because of the Japanese isolation policy and the general hostility towards the West, the international contacts of the religious communities came into focus. On Java, pan-Islamic ideas were criticized. Because of the war, no influences from the Muslim world outside the territories occupied by Japan reached Indonesia. The Japanese still wanted to cleanse Islam from the relations with the Middle East and to try to establish an “Asian-centred Islam”, where, for instance, the Arab language would not be used. Needless to say, these efforts were not successful.\textsuperscript{199}

As for the Christians, it is evident that, through their linkage to the West, they had in general a difficult position \textit{vis-à-vis} the new rulers. In Japanese eyes, they were often regarded as potential traitors. T. S. Sihombing was clear in his assessment and stated that “The Japanese did not understand that Christians were honest and often assumed that we were spies for the enemy.”\textsuperscript{200}

Sihombing had one very concrete confrontation with these allegations. On one occasion, he was summoned to the headquarters of the Kempetai at the Catholic church on Paleisweg. He was interrogated about the finances of the HKBP congregation and was accused of having sent money to the Dutch or the Americans. In his defence, Sihombing said that all the money collected by the congregation was for the salary of the clergy and that no money was sent abroad.

\textsuperscript{198} Sihombing 1965, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{199} Benda 1968, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{200} “Ndang porsea Jepang sasintongna ni halak Kristen jala sai tongtong do dianggap halak Kristen i ma matamata musu.” Sihombing 1965, p. 16.
He also told them that it was in fact missionaries from Germany, an ally of Japan, who had founded the HKBP. The statement had a positive effect on the Kempetai officer and Sihombing was allowed to leave. Later, a Methodist minister was questioned in a similar manner. Because the Methodist mission came from the USA, it was more difficult for him to defend himself. On this occasion, the Japanese officer also brought forward the positive example of the HKBP, that did not have these connections with the enemies of Japan.\(^{201}\) None of the Christian leaders seems to have been exposed to physical torture, which otherwise was quite common. One can assume that the Kempetai was somewhat careful with people who were religious leaders and who had not openly opposed Japanese rule. It is unlikely that the Muslim leaders on the east coast were questioned in the same way.\(^{202}\) Therefore it seems that the questioning of the ministers was motivated more by the general suspicion of the Japanese towards the Christians than the need to check the loyalty of all religious leaders.

In 1944, Sihombing became an official at the local religious office in Medan. But it is uncertain whether his position had anything to do with the treatment that he received from the Kempetai. He does not provide any information about whether his questioning took place before or after he had become an official at the office. It is anyway not certain that such a position was of any help in his relations with the Kempetai. In general, the organisation worked independently of the local administration.\(^{203}\) Their more brutal methods were probably seen by the Japanese authorities as complementary to the role of the administration in cultivating positive relations with local religious leaders. Still, the questioning by the Kempetai seems to have been an isolated event and in general the Japanese used more gentle means to urge the Christians to break their bonds with the West.

One occasion that the Japanese authorities used for this purpose was the meetings that were regularly held with religious leaders in Medan. During these events, T. S. Sihombing delivered speeches and tried to formulate a position that would be satisfactory to the Japanese authorities. During one meeting in August 1944 arranged by the Council for Religious Affairs in Medan, the Japanese chairman urged participants to cleanse their religion from western influences and return to the original Asian culture. On this occasion, T. S. Sihombing held a speech in which he invoked the names of the well-known Japanese Christians Kagawa and Kanamori.\(^{204}\)

---

\(^{201}\) Sihombing 1965, pp. 16f. The identity of the clergyman is unknown. The fact that Sihombing knew about the incident with the Methodist minister suggests that he was a Toba.

\(^{202}\) Had they been questioned, Hamka would probably have mentioned it in his autobiography, Hamka 1974, but he did not do so.

\(^{203}\) Sinar 1972, p. 31

\(^{204}\) Nyhus 1987, p. 140.
Sihombing was present in late 1944 at a meeting with both Protestant and Catholic Christians.²⁰⁵ It was held with the aim of "providing information about the attitude of Christians toward the government and the proper attitude towards guidance in the sphere of Greater Asia."²⁰⁶ Sihombing made a speech entitled "The position of Christians at this time". In this speech, he said that each culture had its own individual characteristics and that every person was obliged to keep to his or her own culture. Christians did not want to change their adat or nationality to the adat or nationality of the West, but remain Asian in adat and nationality. He furthermore mentioned independence as a divine gift and said that God had united the people of the East Indies in one adat and law. The statement probably reflected the general enthusiasm about the forthcoming independence promised by the Japanese Prime Minister on 19 September the same year.²⁰⁷

From these examples, T. S. Sihombing's strategy for dealing with Japanese accusations against Christians starts to appear. In the context in which the Kempetai questioned him, he regarded himself primarily as the leader of the HKBP congregation in Medan. His reference to the German origin of the RMG was intended to show that the HKBP was in fact founded by one of the war allies of Japan. The HKBP members should therefore not be accused of being spies for the enemy.

During the meetings with religious leaders, Sihombing represented not only the HKBP but also Protestant Christians in general. He therefore had to argue in general for the independence of the Christians from the West. By referring to the famous Christians in Japan as an inspiration, he seems to have tried to appeal to the superiority that Japanese military personnel in general felt that their country had. The implication was that the Christians on Sumatra should not be feared, because they actually had Japanese Christians as their raw models. J. Sihombing used the same strategy. When he had become Ephorus, he included a portrait of Kagawa in the HKBP almanac.²⁰⁸

The most intricate argument was, however, present in the last example. On the basis of the general duty to keep one's culture, T. S. Sihombing asserted that Christians fulfilled this duty and did not want to change their Asian nationality or adat and become western. Nationality would then refer to the political identity of the Christians and adat to the cultural one, both of them being contested. Sihombing's defence was to characterise both these entities as "Asian" and not "western". In this part of the argument, Sihombing accepted the generalisation

²⁰⁵ Muslim representatives were also present, Nyhus 1987, p. 178, but they seem to have had the status of observers.
²⁰⁷ Nyhus 1987, p. 141.
²⁰⁸ Nyhus 1987, p. 140.
of, and dichotomy between, Asia and the West that were basic to Japanese propaganda. He argued that the local Christians did not aspire to become western and consequently presented no political threat to Japan. This line of reasoning clearly corresponded to the RMG ideal of a Peoples’ Church, in which the Toba would cultivate their cultural identity under the banner of Christianity. Sihombing now simply rephrased the ideal to appease the Japanese authorities.

On the other hand, the speech also included phrases inspired by the nationalist hopes that were fuelled by the promise of independence just made by the Japanese Prime Minister. Sihombing was bold enough to mention independence as a divine gift and said that God had united the people of Indonesia “in one adat and law”. This phrase clearly alludes to the idea of the basic cultural unity of the various ethnic groups of Indonesia, an idea put forward by the Indonesian nationalists since the 1920s to justify their demands for independence. The fact that Sihombing embraced the idea did not imply that he said that the Toba adat was the same as the adat of other ethnic groups, only that they had a common foundation.

Concluding remarks

For the Toba community in Medan, the Japanese arrival implied that the reality and dreams of a profitable life were crushed. The organisations that the Toba had built up in most cases ceased to exist. Most people fled from Medan to Tapanuli, many even before the Japanese forces had arrived. The initial reaction to rumours of the fast Japanese expansion in the Pacific shows that “the homeland” was still of crucial importance. The Toba generally preferred to face the invasion in Tapanuli. The reasons were, of course, to a large extent that it was thought to be easier to sustain life there. But still the massive return to Tapanuli showed that the Toba in this situation thought that their primary identity was in Tapanuli. They were still partly strangers in Medan, and it was uncertain whether and on what premises a Toba community in Medan would be built up again.

The precarious life of the Christian congregations during this period testifies to the fact that, in the face of the challenges of the period, it was difficult to uphold organised Christian life. With regard to Japanese religious policies, T. S. Sihombing played a crucially important role in rectifying the negative image of Christians in general and the Toba in particular. As a Christian representative on Japanese bodies and as an official of the Office for Religious

209 Nyhus points out that this concept, ironically enough, probably originated with the idea of the Orient in Europe. Nyhus 1987, p. 144.
Affairs, he tried to interpret Japanese policies as pragmatically as possible. He also tried to make as much use as he could of the negotiating power he had. He was able to project an image of Christians generally, including Toba Christians, as essentially not hostile to Japanese rule. Toba Christians were not imitators of the West and united in the adat of Indonesians generally. In this sense, he followed the tradition of Volkschristianizierung, which included the proposition that the Toba would remain Toba also under the banner of Christianity.

With reference to the nationalist concept of the cultural unity of the various ethnic groups in Indonesia, Sihombing also appears as an articulate Christian nationalist. His nationalist stand and abilities also had the effect that some contacts were developed with regional Muslim leaders, laying the foundation for future Christian participation in nationalist action.
Introduction

During the Japanese period, the Toba in Medan had encountered many economic, political and ideological problems, and the majority of the community had returned to Tapanuli. From 1945 onwards, Indonesian history took a new turn, characterised by thoroughgoing political changes and a war between Dutch and Indonesian forces concerning the status of the former colony. During this period, Medan was the seat of Dutch troops, while in the interior the boundaries between Dutch and Indonesian forces moved back and forth several times. Because of these developments, it is natural that the political aspects should play an important role in this chapter. It was in this fluid political landscape that Toba ethno-religious identity was articulated.

The main questions here are as follows: Was it possible for the Toba to return to Medan and on what premises? How did the Toba generally relate to the political changes and in what way did the Christian leaders in Medan manoeuvre in a sometimes tumultuous, political situation? In what way was the ecumenical tradition of Medan upheld?

Medan and the struggle for Indonesian independence

During the first few months of 1945, Japanese officials on Sumatra established advisory councils to prepare for the future independence of Indonesia. In August representatives had been gathered on Java to prepare for independence. In Jakarta, a central committee for the preparation of the independence of Indonesia (Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia) was launched on 9 August. In general, the period of Japanese occupation had had the effect that a very large number of people had been politicised and now supported the nationalist cause. On 17 August, two days after the Japanese surrender, the nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Republic of Indonesia and formed a government. Even though Japanese forces remained in Indonesia, the national-
ists started to organise the government and establish political parties. Indonesian organisations and groups that supported the nationalist cause now called themselves “republican”. There were frequent debates about the foundation of the new State. Generally, Sukarno managed to gain support for his inclusive nationalism and the ideological concept of Panca Sila. It consisted of five principles: belief in God, nationalism, humanitarianism, social justice and democracy. They were sufficiently vague to appeal to many groups. The main debate was between orthodox Muslim leaders, who wanted a specific role for Islam or at least that Muslims should obey Islamic law, and Javanese, inclusive Muslims, such as Sukarno and Christians, who were uncomfortable with or objected to these proposals.

In North Sumatra, the Japanese authorities maintained a tight grip over information. It was therefore not until 22 August that the Japanese governor in Medan informed a number of prominent Indonesians of the Japanese surrender that had taken place on the 14th. He added that Sukarno had declared independence on the 17th but warned participants that the declaration should not be made public. At the time, three prominent, conservative nationalists had already been flown to Jakarta by the Japanese authorities to take part in preparations for independence. When the committee ended on 22 August, Mohammad Hassan, who, as a member of the East Sumatra delegation, had been appointed governor of the new province of Sumatra with its capital Medan and returned to Sumatra. In retrospect, the historian Michael van Langenberg thought it was a great mistake to utilise Medan as the centre of the province. The region was one of the most heterogeneous in Indonesia, with strong, ethnic and political tensions. It was also exposed to attacks from the Dutch side. The leaders chosen by the central government were afraid that to declare independence publicly would be to invite riots and general unrest. It was therefore only on 30 September that the Republic was officially proclaimed in Medan.

---

1 In 1945, a compromise was reached. The Jakarta charter was added to the Constitution, which said that Muslims should be obliged to obey Islamic law, and into the constitution it was written that the President had be a Muslim. However, objections, mainly from the Christian strongholds in the eastern archipelago, soon led to these regulations being dropped. Even since then, they have played an important part in the debates about religion and politics in Indonesia. For an analysis of the debate, see Muskens 1969, pp. 149ff.

2 According to him, the main reason for choosing Medan was that the nationalist establishment was “most at ease in the Western-orientated, ‘sophisticated’ environments of the large cities, such as Medan and Jakarta. By the criteria of western sophistication, Medan in 1945 was, within Sumatra, a virtual island of social and political ‘development’ in a sea of ‘backwardness’... it was only people like themselves whom they could regard as being capable of ‘proper’ (conservative and rational) leadership of the republican movement.” Langenberg 1972, p. 44.

3 Langenberg 1972, pp. 33f.
A few days after the Japanese surrender, Dutch commando units landed north of Medan and established themselves in the city. In early October, British Allied forces, mainly consisting of Indian soldiers, arrived in Medan to take over from and disarm the Japanese troops, to release prisoners of war and to maintain law and order. In relation to the Dutch troops, the British were superior and Dutch officials could act only through the Allied military authority.

The Allied forces were effectively confined to Medan, while the rest of the region was in the hands of various nationalist groups. Medan itself was in effect a city that was divided between an “allied” and a “republican” part. The local administration under the leadership of Governor Hassan co-operated with the British, who relied on the help of the Republican representatives to uphold law and order in their territories.

Political parties were founded that in most cases represented branches of parties also present on Java. Party organisation was in general rudimentary, and there were few efforts to reach out beyond the residency level to the districts and villages. Apart from the established, cautious, nationalist leaders there was a growing group of more radical nationalists who in the proclamation of independence saw a revolutionary promise of a new society in which old hierarchies would be overturned. These people formed armed groups, so-called lasyars, who to a large extent operated independently of the central Republican administration and the regular Republican Army that had started to be organised. The leaders were often organised Communists. The lasyars were often built on ethnic sentiments and sometimes violent conflicts arose between them. In March 1946, for example, Pakpak and Karo Batak lasyars killed 300 and wounded 700 Toba migrants in the Pakpak area around Sidikalang.

In this tense political situation, Malay sultans and Simalungun raja were especially exposed because of their previous alliances with the Dutch authorities. They became targets of radical nationalists who thought that the revolution demanded that all traditional authorities should be done away with. In March 1946, these armed groups killed many members of the families of the sultans and some raja in Simalungun. This development is called the “social revolution”. It implied that East Sumatra was one of the very few areas of Indonesia where a

---

4 Reid 1979, pp. 151f.
5 Reid 1979, pp. 158f.
6 Reid 1979, pp. 158f.
7 Liddle 1970, p. 51.
8 Langenberg 1972, pp. 24ff.
9 Reid 1979, p. 257.
10 The social revolution is treated in detail in Reid 1979, pp. 220ff.
revolution was at least partly carried through, in the sense that the traditional authorities were violently removed from power.

The British forces also met with more and more counter-violence, to which they felt the need to react. The social revolution and the general feeling that political and security developments were getting out of hand in early April 1946 led the British to bring in a group of politicians, including three Socialist cabinet ministers, from Java, to try to calm down the radical revolutionaries. One of them was a HKBP member, Amir Sjarifuddin, at the time Defence Minister of the Republican Government. By Sjarifuddin and his colleagues, the “social revolution” was regarded as a development that threatened the position of their own government and its reputation abroad. It is highly likely that the Dutch administrators and military personnel regarded this action by the British not only as a de facto recognition of the Republican authorities but also as direct support for the efforts to unite the nationalist side.

At numerous meetings and rallies, attended by a majority of the population in Medan, the cabinet ministers tried to convince the radical nationalists that nationalist enthusiasm was all right, provided that they supported and were willing to be directed by the Republican government and administration. They also decided to support the Republican governor of the region, even though, as a cautious conservative nationalist, he had a rather weak position. The visit of the ministers had the effect that the radical revolution started to lose momentum and a moderate group within the local Communist party realised that the time for direct revolutionary action had gone for the time being. Laskyar groups started to disintegrate and to fight amongst themselves. The years 1946-47 saw a large number of conflicts, often involving Toba units against the rest.

The generally insecure situation in Medan had effects on the non-European population. One example is that in December 1946 most of the Toba who had remained in the city during the Japanese occupation left after several incidents of shooting. They felt that the city was not a safe place any longer.

The Allied troops were not intended to remain for long in Indonesia. Ever since their defeat by the Japanese in 1942, the Dutch had been determined to re-establish themselves in their former colony. In December 1946, as a consequence of the Linggayati agreement in November 1946, when the Dutch side accepted the Republic as the de facto authority in Java, Madura and Sumatra in preparation for the creation of a federal Indonesia, the British finally left Indonesia. The

---

11 Reid 1979, pp. 241f.  
12 Reid 1979, pp. 241ff.  
13 Reid 1979, pp. 258f.  
14 Sihombing 1965, p. 17.
Linggayat agreement quickly became obsolete. It was an effect of the establishment of Dutch-sponsored, federal states without previous consultations with Republican leaders.

By mid-1947, the Dutch side was ready to attack the Republicans directly. On 20 July 1947, Dutch forces on Java launched a “police action” in which they occupied large parts of the island. The Dutch forces on North Sumatra, until then effectively confined to Medan, spread inland and took the major towns in the plantation region, including Pematang Siantar. The strategy was an obvious indication that the main goal was to secure the western commercial interests in the area. The various armed nationalist groups withdrew further inland and into the countryside. In the perspective of nationalist-minded Indonesians, Dutch expansion implied that the “real enemy” had returned. Nationalist groups, who had had frequent conflicts amongst themselves, now found a new sense of unity around their original goal to drive out the Dutch.

The nationalists used the scorched-earth policy. Because of the general uncertainty, the Toba who still lived on the east coast and in Simalungun decided to return to Tapanuli. They were afraid to use the roads and instead walked for several days in the jungle. On the way, armed groups attacked them and, sometimes in the name of the revolution, plundered, raped and killed. On the other hand, the spread of Dutch forces also implied that communications became easier in East Sumatra. One result was that some Toba returned to the city. The increase is shown by the fact that the Christian HIS in Medan, when it re-opened in August 1947, had 25 classes and was a “great success”. Not all of these students were Toba, but probably the majority were from that ethnic group.

On the political level, the Dutch authorities decided to continue to launch their solution to the problem of how the former colony should be ruled, i.e. a federal Indonesia under the leadership of the Netherlands. As a consequence, the State of East Sumatra (Negara Sumatera Timur) was founded in East Sumatra in December 1947. In theory, the State was independent, but in fact it was totally dependent on Dutch support. Its main indigenous supporters were the Malay aristocracy and the Simalungun Batak leaders, who felt threatened as a result of the social revolution. In the face of increasing migration from outside, these groups stressed that they were the original inhabitants of East Sumatra. Some educated

---

16 Reid 1979, p. 259.
17 Nyhus 1987, p. 98.
Toba and Karo also supported the State.19 Simalungun Batak, who until then had been only a small community in Medan, now moved into the city and some occupied important positions in the administration of the State, such as the office of the Mayor of Medan. Others came to Medan for studies or business activities.20

Dutch forces remained limited to the East Sumatra region until December 1948, when, in a parallel to the similar operation on Java, they advanced into Tapanuli. They occupied the major towns as far south as Tarutung. The countryside was controlled by askyars or Republican forces. The politicians who had been appointed by the Republic, such as the resident of Tapanuli, P. Lumbantobing, withdrew to the countryside.21

The future of Indonesia was, however, not settled on the battlefield, but in political negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesian sides. In August 1949, a cease-fire was agreed, and in December sovereignty was transferred to an independent, federal Indonesia. In August 1950, the State was transformed into a unitary state, the Republic of Indonesia.

The intrusion of Dutch forces into Tapanuli in late 1948 had the effect that channels of communication were re-opened between Tapanuli and Medan. When negotiations between the Dutch and Indonesian sides were started and the level of fighting decreased, a large number of Toba started to travel to Medan. Most of them had previously lived there and now became employed by the local administration. At first, they worked for the Dutch-sponsored, East Sumatra State, later for the Indonesian Government. Many settled in a part of the Medan Baru area just west of the present Jalan Iskandar Muda, where the East Sumatra State built houses for its employees.22 The houses were small and simple, and provided the opportunity to obtain relatively cheap accommodation. To the Toba, it was also important that the arrangement should hold out the possibility that the houses would eventually be owned by the civil servants themselves. Furthermore, a group of Toba teachers returned, presumably because the salaries at the schools in Medan were higher and employment more secure that in Tapanuli.23

19 In spite of their common, pro-Dutch stance there were conflicts within this group. Malay aristocrats wanted to restore their pre-war powers, while other western-educated Malays, supported by Dutch officials, wanted a more "democratic" state. They wanted to secure the status of the Malays, while being able to incorporate other ethnic groups. Participants from other ethnic groups were also aware that the State might turn out only to be a tool for the Malays, at the time a small minority in the region, to increase their powers. For the development of the East Sumatra State and these tensions, see Langenberg 1982.
20 Girsang 1979, p. 7.
22 It may have been these houses that Dootjes refers to when he says that in 1949 the Municipal Council built 100 volks-woningen. Dootjes 1952, p. 37.
23 Interviews.
There were also Indonesians who now took the chance to return to Medan to establish themselves as traders and manufacturers. In 1948, various Indonesian companies were established in the city. The next year, an Indonesian Association of Commerce (Persatuan Dagang Indonesia) was founded. More specialised, branch organisations were also founded, such as the Medan Indonesian Textile Union (Indonesisch Textiel Bond Medan) in June 1948. It is evident that the "Indonesian" character of these organisations meant that they were organisations for indigenous entrepreneurs, in contrast to the Chinese businessmen, who were already well established in Medan. There were several, small, Toba textile businesses in Medan already at the end of the Dutch period. It is therefore likely that they re-established themselves in the city in the late 1940s.

Political attitudes of the Toba Batak

The pro-Dutch political viewpoint

When the Dutch forces returned to East Sumatra, there were certainly Toba who had been looking forward to their arrival. One old woman once told me that "a lot of Batak here in Medan were happy when the Dutch arrived, although they do not want to admit that today".

According to the HKBP minister, T. S. Sihombing, who worked in Medan in the 1940s: "Many among our people were not pleased about our independence, because they accepted Dutch propaganda that, if Indonesia gained independence, a religious war would begin." The same kind of argument had been used by the Dutch-sponsored CEP in the 1930s to keep Christians away from the nationalist movement. With regard to these kinds of pro-Dutch attitudes, it is not surprising that some Toba actively supported and took part in the plans leading up to the formation of the East Sumatra State.

In early August 1947, only ten days after the Dutch military expansion in the region, a committee to prepare for an East Sumatra State was founded. It consisted mainly of Malay and Simalungun nobles. They were immediately urged by the Dutch authorities to try to broaden the ethnic composition of the committee,

25 Dootjes 1952, p. 34.
26 Dootjes 1952, p. 31.
27 Ind. "Banyak Batak di Medan bergembira waktu Belanda datang, tapi sekarang sulit mengakuinya."
in order not to appear as blatant propagandists of specific ethnic interests in the region. To this end, members of other ethnic groups, Toba, Chinese and groups from eastern Indonesia, were included in late August. The Toba members were Florencius Lumbantobing, H. F. Sitompul and F. J. Nainggolan. When the federal State had been set up, they became members of its “parliament”.

These men were part of the small group of Toba intellectuals in Medan and had become estranged from the Republic after having suffered during the social revolution. On the other hand, they would not accept the restoration of the pre-war power of the Malay sultans that the Malay nobles expected from the formation of the State. The leaders of the State basically regarded the Toba as intruders and as an advance guard of their relatives, who were just waiting to flood into the east coast and take part in its riches. The Toba who supported the State therefore soon became disillusioned with their positions. They set up their own organisation, the Tapanuli Association (Persatuan Tapanuli), to protect their own interests against any effort to give the “original inhabitants” (Ind. orang asli) undue influence.

Toba federalist supporters also wanted Dutch forces to intervene in armed conflicts in Tapanuli between the Toba and other ethnic groups and suggested that a Toba federal State should be founded in Tapanuli. Some Toba raja, who had previously been employed by the Dutch administration, supported the suggestion.

How widespread were these pro-Dutch sentiments? According to Van Langenberg, the example of the Toba who supported the East Sumatra State “in no way reflected popular Toba support for the proposed East Sumatra state. On the contrary, at the mass level ethnic conflict between orang asli and the Toba Batak communities in East Sumatra was by now intense.” Van Langenberg therefore gives the impression that it was only a handful of intellectual Toba who were pro-Dutch. In contrast, the other examples of pro-Dutch sentiments that I have referred to make it more likely that a pro-Dutch stance was not uncommon among Toba urban professionals and civil servants. This group of people had been educated by Dutch or other westerners and had before the arrival of the Japanese obtained relatively well-paid positions under Dutch leadership. In their view the Dutch colonial times were the “good times” that had been rudely interrupted by the Japanese occupation. For many men and women, the basic motive behind their pro-Dutch stance was that they thought that Dutch supremacy would provide the best opportunities to secure a good and stable life for themselves and their families. To them, colonialism and hamajuon were inseparable.

29 Langenberg 1982, pp. 8ff.
33 Langenberg 1982, p. 11.
An indication that the pro-Dutch stance was strong is that in 1948 political tensions between “republicans” and those who supported “federalism” were so intense that, before the forthcoming synod of the HKBP in November, the Republican authorities forbade representatives from Java and East Sumatra to attend. In 1949, the conflict, according to T. S. Sihombing, did not cause many problems in the Medan congregation, although there were still conflicts in Tapanuli between these two groups. The fact that tensions in Medan had weakened indicates that, by then, the Toba who initially had supported the federal state had become estranged from it.

Partai Kristen Indonesia and the need for a Christian nationalism

Among the educated Toba in Medan, there were also people with strong nationalist convictions. Some of them might have taken part in political activities before 1942, but most of them had become conscious opponents of colonial rule during the Japanese occupation.

Only a few days after the declaration of independence, these Toba founded a Christian political party. Two of those who were involved were husband and wife, Saladin Sarumpaet (1914-92) and Julia Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat (b. 1917). Both of them had studied on Java and had returned to Tapanuli to work as teachers. Saladin Sarumpaet had been the head of two mission schools before he moved to Medan with his family in 1941 to take up a position as a government teacher. During the Japanese period he worked as a teacher in Deli Tua near Medan. With the arrival of the Allied forces, Sarumpaet left the teaching profession. He and his wife now entered the field of politics.

---

34 Nyhus 1987, p. 146.
36 Julia Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat came from a prestigious Christian family in Tapanuli. Her father was Renatus Hutabarat, who was a demang and a member of the Synod of the HKBP. Her mother, Mariana boru Lumbantobing, was the daughter of Johannes Lumbantobing, one of the first Toba ministers. She was, like her future husband, who was the son of a minister, given opportunity to study at the HIS level. After graduation, both of them studied at the Christian Indigenous Teachers' School (Christelijke Hoogere Inlandse Kweekschool) in Solo, where they also met and married. In 1936, they returned to Tapanuli and taught at various mission schools. S. Sarumpaet advanced to become the head of the Christelijke Schakelschool in Nainggolan on Samosir in 1938 and of the Christelijke HIS Dr. Nommensen in Sibolga 1940. In 1941, they left the service of the RMG, when Sarumpaet accepted a teaching position at one of the government HIS in Medan. On the arrival of the Japanese in 1942, Sarumpaet was transferred to a farmers' college (Sekolah Menengah Tani/Kogyo Gakko) in Delitua near Medan. Riwayat Hidup Saladin Sarumpaet n.d. and Catatan mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat. Sarumpaet family archives.
The foundation of a Christian party is described by J. Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat as follows:

Following the call of President Sukarno and Hatta that could be heard on the radio, people started to found political parties. Local groups were founded in various parts of Medan. The Christians were also not left behind. My husband, together with his friends, founded the Partai Kristen Indonesia (PARKI) for Sumatra in Medan on 20 August 1945.37

Founding members included the general chairman, Frederich Sihombing, who worked as a veterinary surgeon, the secretary Saladin Sarumpaet, a teacher, and Sahala Simatupang, the head of the central post office in Medan. The last-mentioned was the elder brother of the well-known T. B. Simatupang, at the time Chief of Staff of the Republican Army.38 T. S. Sihombing referred to the founders of the party as “some prominent Christians”.39

The members of the PARKI appear to have been a small group of well-educated professionals, who had remained in the city during the Japanese occupation. As regarded their ethnic identification, all of them were Toba. It was the first effort of the Christians of the region to organise politically in the new political context that the declaration of independence symbolised. This group of nationalist Toba had had close ties with westerners and had become partly westernised. It was, for instance, not uncommon for well-educated, nationalist Toba in Medan to speak mainly Dutch at home. Taking their background into account, it is highly likely that they were “conservative” nationalists, who generally supported an orderly struggle for independence and not uncontrollable revolutionary fervour.

As regarded timing, the PARKI is reported to have been founded within days of the declaration of independence. The account by Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat, if taken literally, would imply that information from Java was available via the radio and that Sukarno and Hatta were urging Indonesians to found political parties, presumably on the basis of the declaration of independence. If this was the case, van Langenberg may be mistaken when he states that knowledge of

---


38 Catatan mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat, p. 4. Sarumpaet family archives. Sahala Simatupang had probably been promoted to this position by the Japanese administration, since it is very unlikely that he could have obtained the position with the Dutch still in power. Another possibility is that it is his position after the war that is referred to.

the declaration of independence at the time was limited to a very small group of Indonesians.\textsuperscript{40} It is, however, possible that Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat pre-dates the radio broadcasts she heard later. If this was the case, her husband was one of the prominent Indonesians who heard about the Japanese defeat and the declaration of independence from the Japanese governor on 22 August. The next day, he gathered some nationalist Toba friends and founded the PARKI.

In August-September 1945, the party was consolidated, local branches being formed in East Sumatra, in Tapanuli and, through various contacts, in the towns of Padang, Palembang, Bandar Lampung and Pekan Baru further south.\textsuperscript{41} It is safe to assume that the contacts referred to were with Toba friends or clan-mates who lived in these cities.\textsuperscript{42} Connections were also established on Java. Sometime in late 1945, F. Sihombing left Medan after having been appointed by the Republican governor as a member of the Central Indonesian National Committee (Komite National Indonesia Pusat, KNIP) in Jakarta to represent the Christians.\textsuperscript{43} The Committee functioned as a sort of preliminary parliament to assist the President before elections could take place. On the local level, the PARKI took part in the emerging republican structures. S. Sarumpaet was, for instance, a member of the Perjuangan Nasional di Medan, took part in the efforts to found a local military force and was a member of the Volksfront representing the Christians.\textsuperscript{44}

Because the PARKI did not pay salaries and they did not have steady employment, S. Sarumpaet and J. Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat in late 1945 decided to return to Tapanuli.\textsuperscript{45} While living in Tapanuli, they could be supported by relatives. The move to Tapanuli may, however, also be explained with reference to strategy. They thought that it was important to establish the base for the party in the Christian heartland of Sumatra.\textsuperscript{46}

In January 1946, J. Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat initiated a women’s section of the party (Wanita Parki Tapanuli), based in Tarutung. She acted as its chairman

\textsuperscript{40} Langenberg 1972, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{41} Catatan2 mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat, p. 4. Sarumpaet family archives.
\textsuperscript{42} In 1952, all of them had a contingent of Toba residents. \textit{Synode Godang HKBP} 1952, p. 21. It is likely that there were Toba present in these cities also in the 1940s.
\textsuperscript{43} Catatan2 mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat. Sarumpaet family archives.
\textsuperscript{44} Riwayat Hidup S. Sarumpaet. Sarumpaet family archives.
\textsuperscript{45} Catatan2 mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat, p. 4. Sarumpaet family archives.
\textsuperscript{46} Catatan2 mengenai Pengalaman Kegiatan Dra J. Sarumpaet-Hutabarat di kalangan Wanita di Gereja dan Masyarakat, pp. 4f. Sarumpaet family archives.
\textsuperscript{47} “Tarbuka ma dalam di Inanta memperjuangkan negara laos mamboan angka donganna boruboru tu zaman na imbaru.”
and remained in that post well into the 1950s. In her own estimation, the work of the women's section during the war was a way to "open the road to women to defend the nation and bring women friends into the new era." During the coming years, the organisation was active in social work and health care.

The PARKI was not the only Christian party founded in North Sumatra during the latter part of 1945. In Pematang Siantar, Partai Politik Kaum Kristen (Political Party of the Christian Community) PPKK was founded on 10 November 1945. The first board was led by the Toba Melanchton Siregar, the future leader of the Christian party in North Sumatra and in Indonesia. Members of the board included four Toba, two Simalungun and one Angkola. Founding members were said to represent "all Christian groups" (Ind. semua golongan kristen). The statement implies that members of the board were members of different denominations. Christians from other ethnic groups in Pematang Siantar, such as Javanese or Chinese, were not elected to the board and most likely not present at meetings either. It is still significant that the party founded in Pematang Siantar had a somewhat broader, ethnic base than the one in Medan, where it appears that exclusively Toba were active. The pattern is similar to that in the 1930s, when nationalist Bataks in Medan founded their own, separate, political organisation, while Toba in Pematang Siantar were active in parties with a multi-ethnic base.

The relations between these two parties are somewhat unclear. It seems that the founding of the PPKK was not co-ordinated with the PARKI that had been initiated in Medan some months earlier. On the other hand, the PPKK soon changed its name to PARKI, the probable reason being that the Toba who left...
Medan in late 1946 joined the PPKK in Pematang Siantar. This development most likely meant that the two parties had been united.

In late 1945, the PARKI merged with the Partai Kristen National, a party founded by a Javanese Protestant minister, Basuki Probownoto. The new party held its first congress on Java in December 1945 and became Partai Kristen Indonesia, but now with the acronym PARKINDO. It is likely that F. Sihombing, now a member of the Indonesia National Committee, played an important role when contacts between the two organisations were initiated. On Sumatra, the designation PARKI continued, however, to be used throughout the 1940s. The local initiatives in northern Sumatra to found a Christian Party were now in the process of being integrated into the efforts to establish a Christian party for the whole of Indonesia.

As a consequence of the Dutch military invasion in July 1947, the PARKINDO and other political parties could not function as intended. Bangun says, “in practice the PARKINDO was just a name on a paper.” It was reorganised only after the cease-fire on Sumatra in 1949, when they appointed members to the new, Republican, representative councils. The members consisted mainly of two groups - ministers, elders or other people employed by the Churches and government teachers.

When the party had been based in Pematang Siantar, it did not limit itself to political activities, but also organised a small military force, called Divisi Panah (the Bow Division). It was organised from Pematang Siantar by Melanchton Siregar. Like other forces of the kind, Divisi Panah managed to obtain weapons originally brought to Sumatra by the Japanese or Allied forces. The Division was not large but took part in fighting against Dutch forces around Medan and, when the Dutch

---

52 Bangun, Payung 1987, pp. 38f.
53 In the available documentation about these two parties, one is struck by the lack of mutual recognition between the group in Pematang Siantar and S. Sarumpaet and J. Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat, who organised the PARKI, first in Medan and then in Tapanuli. A possible reason may be that communications between the two cities were somewhat difficult. This would fit very well with the general observation that party organisation in general was rudimentary and the fact that the two parties at this stage never had many members. It is, however, more likely that the role of the Sarumpaets in organising the PARKI is not mentioned in the sources close to Melanchton Siregar, because in the 1950s they had to resign from leading positions in the Christian party PARKINDO. This was an effect of their heavy involvement in the so-called PRRI rebellion on Sumatra in 1958. In Bangun’s biography of Melanchton Siregar, S. Sarumpaet is only once mentioned as a prominent PARKINDO leader who represented the party in the constitutional assembly, but in a context in which his support for the regional rebellion of the PRRI is highlighted. See Bangun, Payung 1987, pp. 75f.
54 Bangun, Payung 1987, p. 39.
55 “Praktis nama PARKINDO hanya tercantum di atas kertas.”
56 Bangun, Payung 1987, p. 40.
spread inland, it took part in the unsuccessful defence of Pematang Siantar. After the fall of the city, the force disintegrated and members joined the Republican Army.\textsuperscript{57} The example shows that the circumstances could induce educated politicians to set up a PARKI \textit{lashyar} force, although it was insignificant in military strength.

The other main party that the Toba joined was Partai Nasional Indonesia. This was Sukarno's party, whose credibility was due to its leader and its long history of struggle against Dutch colonialism.\textsuperscript{58} Prominent Batak nationalists, such as Ferdinand Lumbantobing, were active in the party.

It was, however, the PARKI that became the largest party among the Toba, with a mass basis in Tapanuli. Relations between the Christian party and the Churches, especially the HKBP congregations, were close. Sometimes local party leadership almost totally overlapped the local congregational leadership.\textsuperscript{59} There were at the central level different opinions about how much the Churches, as such, should engage in politics.\textsuperscript{60} But the general idea was that the leaders of the Churches should not involve themselves too much in the Christian party.\textsuperscript{61} On the local level and on an informal basis, connections between Church and Party remained strong.

Those who supported PARKI/PARKINDO thought that a special Christian party would satisfy their political aspirations. According to Bangun “Among Christians the need also arose to create a tool that would have an impact and fulfil the aspirations and role of participation in (the struggle for) freedom and state-life.”\textsuperscript{62} The need for a Christian party was underpinned by the explanation that Christians should be responsible as Christians also in the political realm and contribute to build up the new nation. Most often, these motives were formulated in positive terms, but it is also clear that the function of the party was also to defend “Christian interests”, whenever they were perceived to be threatened.\textsuperscript{63} In practice, these motives were intertwined.

\textsuperscript{57} Bangun, Payung 1987, pp. 57ff, 62f.
\textsuperscript{58} Nyhus 1987, p. 486.
\textsuperscript{59} Nyhus 1987, p. 486.
\textsuperscript{60} For the discussion in the HKBP, see Nyhus 1987, pp. 487f.
\textsuperscript{61} One example is T. J. Sitorus, who was vice-chairman of the PARKINDO in Porsea and later held the same position in the party in the Toba area. After 1946, when he was elected Ephorus of his Church, Huria Christen Batak, he remained only a sympathiser, because the Church had members who sympathised with different parties. \textit{Setia Sampai Akhir} 1989, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{62} Ind. “Di kalangan orang-orang yang beragama Kristen timbul pula keperluan adanya asah yang dapat menampung dan menyalurkan aspirasi serta peran sertanya dalam kemerdekaan dna hidup bernegara.” Bangun, Payung 1987, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{63} For a similar point, see Nyhus 1987, pp. 487f.
The founding of the PARKI therefore implies a change with regard to the ideals that nationalist Toba adhered to. With the exception of Medan, Toba who supported Indonesian nationalism before 1945 had often been active in political parties not connected with any specific religion. The parties that said they defended “Christian interests”, such as the CEP, were in favour of colonialism. After the declaration of independence, most politically active Toba accepted the ideal of Christian politics.

In the documents I have had access to, it is significant that nothing is said about traditional, western, political issues such as the role of the state and economic policies. The only element that can be called ideological in the new party was that it was “Christian”. Certainly the PARKI/PARKINDO later came to develop programmes and policies regarding these issues and positioned itself in relation to other political parties and movements in the Indonesian political landscape. The impression gained from interviews with Toba who used to sympathise with PARKINDO was, however, that, for most members and supporters, these political issues were not the most important or not really important at all. On one occasion, an old woman I interviewed said “at the time we did not support PARKINDO because we were interested in politics but because we were Christians.”

64 For many Toba, political support for the Christian party was just a natural outcome of their religious affiliation.65 Its Christian character was thought to be sufficient to ensure that it worked for their political interests.

Congregational work between Dutch and Indonesian political interests

The development of Batak congregations

Christian congregations in Medan had during the Japanese period either ceased to exist or continued their activities on a low level. Many facilities, such as churches and schools, had been taken over by the Japanese administration. After 1945, the Churches tried to get these assets back.

A Dutch source reports that in 1947 all denominations were holding services in the churches.66 It certainly wanted to give the impression that life, in this

64 Ind. “Waktu itu kami tidak mendukun PARKINDO karena suka politik, tapi karena kami orang kristen”.
65 For the general point that the political parties in North Sumatra were primarily a way of ensuring the representation of a cultural group, see Langenberg 1976, p. 485.
66 Dootjes 1952, p. 29.
case religious life, was returning to a normal state under Dutch supremacy. It is still likely that the congregations, preferably those with European connections, had by then been able to reclaim their church-buildings. The HKBP appears to have had access to its church from late 1946. In the view of the Dutch authorities, to allow congregations to use their churches was a very likely way to gain the loyalty of local Christians.

Schools had been nationalised by the Japanese administration and it took more work for the Churches to regain at least some of them. Because the area of North Sumatra was controlled by two rival administrations, the Churches had to negotiate with both of them. I shall discuss these issues in relation to the former HKBP schools in a later section.

Another important aspect of the life of the Churches before 1942 had been the presence of western missionaries. The only one who had remained in the region since 1942 was the Swedish Methodist missionary R. Alm. After the end of World War II, missionaries arrived in Medan and tried to resume contact with local Christians. The generally insecure situation for westerners meant that the missionaries were confined to the city. The only alternative was to have Dutch troops escort them into other areas under Dutch control. Another problem facing them was that, in a time of nationalist fervour, they did not know how local Christians would react to their presence. The position of missionaries in relation to the leaders of the HKBP was especially sensitive and will be considered later. There were, however, other missionaries who were able to re-establish contact with Christians for whom they had worked previously.

In June 1947, the American Methodist missionary Klaus, who had been detained by the Japanese, re-started the Methodist English School and a separate school for Chinese, the Methodist Chinese School. After the Dutch military expansion in July the same year, Methodist schools and churches re-opened around Medan, in the cities occupied by Dutch forces. Most of these schools were aimed at the Chinese community, but the Methodist English School soon re-

---

67 Dootjes 1952 is a compilation of data from Dutch reports from 1945 to 1952.
68 At that time, a Dutch missionary moved into the old missionary house beside the church. See later in this chapter.
69 The only exception is a group of American Mennonites. In September 1948, they started to conduct health services and famine relief south of the Asahan River, an area controlled by the Republic. In 1949, they established contact with the small group of Batak Mennonites in South Tapanuli. Gould 1961, p. 130.
ceived Toba students. The Christian HIS in Medan that re-opened in August 1947 already had many Toba students.

In 1945, the Catholic bishop Brans and a few fellow Capuchins, who had spent the war in Japanese prison camps, returned to Medan. They tried to regain contacts with Catholics in the region, but in the city they were not able to meet with Toba Catholics. The old Toba congregation on Padang Bulanweg (the present Jalan Let. Jen. Jamin Ginting) did not function from 1945 to 1949. But the congregations of Tamil and Chinese Catholics were soon re-established and the Chinese congregation grew from 600 in 1946 to 1500 in 1950. The main reason was Chinese migration to Medan from other cities in the region.

Because communications with Republican Tapanuli were not open to him, Brans in early 1946 contacted the Catholic bishop in Semarang, Msg Soegijapranata, the first Indonesian Catholic bishop and a well-known nationalist. Brans asked him to send Indonesian clergy to North Sumatra who would be able to visit the Catholics of the region. The Semarang bishop agreed to the request and on 10 May 1947 the Javanese Jesuit Sutapanitra arrived in Medan. He started to negotiate with the Republican administration in order to obtain permission to leave for Pematang Siantar. Sutapanitra remained in the Republican area of Medan and did not want to contact the Dutch Capuchins in the Dutch part of the town. A Dutch Capuchin only managed to meet him briefly in the house of the Republican Mayor, M. Jusuf, who still resided in the city. On this occasion, the Javanese priest said that he avoided contacts with persons who would compromise his position in relation to the Republican authorities.

Sutapanitra eventually managed to travel to Pematang Siantar, and from there into Tapanuli. He was met everywhere by enthusiastic Catholics. Not only did he conduct services, baptise children and celebrate the Eucharist, but he also had meetings with representatives of the recently established, nationalist Catholic Party and the Republican authorities. Toba Catholic leaders were obviously willing to show their support for the national cause. At least one meeting started with the

---

71 The Christian HIS that re-opened in August 1947 had many Toba students. De Kleine to Kappner, 1 August 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
72 De Kleine to Kappner, 1 August 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
73 Aster 1959, p. 131.
74 This is the best interpretation when Aster writes that the Toba congregation "was not re-established after the war." ("werd na de oorlog niet meer heropgericht."), Aster n.d., p. 134. A few pages later, on p. 136, he refers to this Toba congregation and its activities after the war.
75 Aster n.d., p. 137.
76 Aster 1959, pp. 131ff. His role during the struggle for independence is often referred to in Bank 1983.
77 Aster 1959, p. 133. Susanto 1989, pp. 68f. The person who met him in Medan was Aster himself.
singing of the Indonesian national anthem and raising the red-and-white Indonesian flag. The Jesuit was also a strong nationalist supporter and is reported to have worn a red and white emblem on his dress. It appears that he was welcomed both as a Catholic priest, and as a sort of nationalist ambassador from Java. In the process, he was able to show that the Catholic Church could be positively inclined towards Indonesian independence.

When the Dutch forces in June 1947 launched the first "police action", Sutapanitra was staying in Pematang Siantar and remained faithful to the Republic. Some claim that the red-and-white flag on top of the Catholic church was the last Indonesian flag to be pulled down in Pematang Siantar. The Dutch military forces were accompanied by two Dutch Capuchins, one dressed in military uniform, who tried to resume work in the area. Sutapanitra opposed their presence, because he thought that they would compromise the position of the Catholics in the eyes of the nationalists. He also refused to leave the Catholic rectory, forcing the Capuchins to live among Dutch military officers in the Siantar Hotel. In spite of his opposition, the Dutch Capuchins took over his work. Because Sutapanitra was not able to continue his work or travel safely to Republican territory in North Sumatra, he returned to Java by way of Medan. He was escorted out of Sumatra by Dutch missionaries dressed in military chaplain uniforms, an action that started rumours that the Javanese priest had been captured by the Dutch intelligence service. After the second "police action", Dutch Capuchins went together with the Dutch forces and resumed the work in the local Catholic congregations.

The episode with the Javanese Jesuit shows that the Catholic Church was able to use the fact that they had a national structure and indigenous clergy with nationalist sympathies on Java in order to break their isolation somewhat and reach beyond Medan into the area controlled by the Republic. On the other hand, the relations between the Dutch troops and the missionaries were problematic, at least in the eyes of nationalist-minded Catholics.

In 1948, American Pentecostal missionaries from the Assemblies of God returned to Medan. Pentecostal Churches had before and during the Japanese period been established by Toba in Tapanuli and Pematang Siantar. One example
is R. Siburian, a graduate from the Surabaya Bible Institute, who in 1942 started Gereja Pentakosta Sumatera Utara (the Pentecostal Church of North Sumatra) in Pematang Siantar. It is not clear what relations were established between the Toba Pentecostals and the American missionaries, but it is likely that the Toba Pentecostals sought membership with the congregation when they settled in Medan.

As regarded the other Batak groups, missionaries of the Dutch Missionary Society, some of whom had been released from Japanese prison camps, tried to re-establish connections with Karo Batak Christians. In December 1946, they had not been able to make any contact. The small Karo Christian group that used to live in the city had all left. It was not until January 1947 that the missionaries obtained information that the two Karo priests who had been ordained before 1942 were still alive and had continued to maintain church activities. As a consequence of the second police action, the missionaries were able to travel to towns in the Karo territory, such as Kabamjahe. They established contact with the Church that the Christian Karo had founded in 1943, the Gereja Batak Karo Protestant (GBKP). One of the two ministers, the Rev. T. Sibero, was the first chairman of the General Synod of the Karo Church. In 1948, the missionaries recognised the new Church and transferred all the property still formally owned by the Dutch Missionary Society to it.

Christian Simalungun Batak had in 1940 founded its own district within the HKBP. In Medan, they continued, as before 1942, to hold services separately from the HKBP. In 1948, when Simalungun Batak started to return to Medan, they held services in the church formerly used by Javanese Christians on Jalan Percut/Percutweg (the present Jalan H. O. S. Cokroaminoto) in the eastern part of the city. Services were conducted by a Simalungun minister who travelled from Tebing Tinggi once a month.

A HKBP congregation in Dutch-controlled territory

*With a Toba Batak minister in the middle.* From 1945 to 1950, the HKBP congregation in Medan was stuck in Dutch-controlled territory, while the rest of

---

83 Lempp 1976, pp. 299ff. Today it is one of the largest Batak Pentecostal groups.
84 Neumann to Home Board, 5 December 1946. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
86 Lempp 1976, pp. 38f.
88 Lempp 1976, pp. 38f.
89 Lempp 1976, p. 55.
90 Girsang 1979, p. 7.
the HKBP district of East Sumatra was in the border zone between Dutch and Indonesian interests. Furthermore, its leadership resided in Tarutung, a town that for most part of the war was controlled by Republican forces. These conditions gave rise to a basic problem that influenced the development of the congregation. It led to complex manoeuvring involving the HKBP minister in Medan, the HKBP leadership in Tarutung, the Dutch missionaries who had returned and the two rival administrations.

T. S. Sihombing, who had been the HKBP minister in Medan during the Japanese occupation, stayed in Medan when the Allied forces arrived. He was formally stationed in the city until the end of the struggle for independence. He was not the only minister in Medan who had connections with the HKBP. With the arrival of the Allied forces, a small number of Dutch missionaries who had previously worked for the HKBP were released. One of them was H. F. de Kleine, who had taken over authority in the Church in 1940, after the last German Ephorus had been interned by the Japanese. He now tried to continue his work for the Toba Church that he had served before 1942.

During their internment, the Dutch missionaries had in theory agreed that the HKBP should take over all leadership and administration from the Batak Nias Mission. In the view of the Dutch administration, the latter organisation, although much disliked by the Toba, still administered the former RMG assets in North Sumatra. The Dutch missionaries were now prepared to take action to get these assets transferred to the HKBP. On the other hand, they thought that western missionaries were still needed as advisors and teachers, and for spiritual and intellectual support.91

As a consequence of the conflict between the Batak Nias Zending and the new Toba leadership of the HKBP in the early 1940s, the Dutch missionaries were compromised in the eyes of nationalist-minded Toba. In 1942, the leadership of the HKBP had changed from the “radical” K. Sirait, who was primarily elected because he vigorously opposed the missionaries, to the more “moderate” Justin Sihombing, who had led the HKBP through the vicissitudes of the Japanese occupation.92 It was, however, far from clear how Sihombing would react to the presence of Dutch missionaries who wanted to work with the HKBP.

In late 1945, the missionaries learned that Ephorus Sihombing thought that it would be possible for western missionaries to return, but this time only as

92 The perspective was shared by de Kleine, who thought that Sirait was an “extremist”. De Kleine to Home Board, 8 December 1945. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
advisors and possibly as teachers at the seminary. On the other hand, the missionaries did not know whether the proclamation of independence meant that the leaders of the HKBP were no longer willing to accept them. In spite of the uncertainty about the position of the HKBP, the missionaries made some rather detailed plans about a future missionary presence in Tapanuli. De Kleine suggested that two missionaries should be stationed at the seminary in Sipoholon and one in each district of the Church.

While it was difficult to establish direct relations with the HKBP leadership, de Kleine tried to contact the Toba congregation in Medan. In early December 1945, he described his relations with the Toba in the city as follows:

... in Medan the attitude of the Batak, when they happen to meet me, is courteous and friendly, even though they are very careful and restrained, which is understandable. Also the young Sihombing, whom I have occasionally met with his wife, is friendly as always. When you meet the Batak, they let you know that in their opinion the Church needs European help and co-workers. They stress, however, that leading positions have to remain in Batak hands.

From this quotation, the attitude of Toba in Medan to the Dutch missionaries becomes quite clear. They were in general positive to the presence of western missionaries within the Church, provided that they did not want resume power from the Toba leaders. In view of the political attitudes of the Toba in Medan, it is likely that this attitude was shared by most of them. Given the political situation at the time, it was natural that they should be careful in their contacts with the Dutch missionaries. Such contacts could be interpreted as meaning that they, as Christians, supported the Dutch political interests in the area, which was not necessarily the case.

The quotation also indicates that the opinions of T. S. Sihombing were important when de Kleine tried to figure out what the members of the HKBP in Medan thought about his and his colleagues’ presence. It is therefore important to try to sketch the development of the political views of T. S. Sihombing.

93 D. Salinger to Home Board, Medan 1 January 1946. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra. The information was conveyed by the Methodist missionary R. Alm. It is uncertain what kind of contact he had had with the Ephorus. Like other westerners, he was restricted to the area around Medan. But because he had lived in the region throughout the Japanese period it is possible that he could communicate with the Ephorus through his Toba contacts. It is even possible that Alm managed to meet Sihombing in 1945, when the Japanese still ruled over the region.

94 Kijne to Zendingsconsulaat, Medan 6 December 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.

95 Kijne to Home Board, Medan 15 April 1946. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.

96 “... in Medan is de houding der Bataks, als ze me onderweg tegenkomen, beleefd en vriendelijk, hoewel ze erg voorzichtig en terughoudend zijn, wat ook begrijpelijk is. Ook de jonge Ds Sihombing, wie ik met zijn vrouw herhaaldelijk ontmoet, is vriendelijk als altijd. Als man de Bataks ontmoet, dan geven zij als hun mening te kennen dat de Kerk Europese hulp en medewerkers nodig heeft. Met klemtoon zegt man echter dat de leidende posities in Bataksehanden moeten blijven.” De Kleine to Home Board, 8 December 1945. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
In the 1930s, when he was studying on Java, Sihombing had escaped several times from the dormitory to attend nationalist meetings. When he returned to Tapanuli in 1940 to be ordained, together with two other students from Java, they faced a situation that in retrospect he evaluated accordingly:

At our ordination we faced a difficult situation, a large jungle or a wide ocean, as we saw it. We saw nationalism and a fanaticism that was overflowing, and the paternalism of the Batak Nias Mission that wanted to hold on to everything, the colonial attitude of the Dutch who did not want the HKBP to become independent. Not counting the political movement, it also concerned the unfinished transfer from the RMG, the split in the Church between those who wanted the HKBP to be free and those who wanted it to be a part of the Batak Nias Zending.

Sihombing obviously supported the strivings towards a truly autonomous Church and was critical of the Dutch-sponsored Batak Nias Mission. On the other hand, he was concerned about the split in the Church that these issues had caused and weary of “fanatical” nationalism, i.e. the radical revolutionaries. During the period 1942-45, he co-operated with the Japanese authorities but could occasionally show support for the national cause. It is difficult to doubt that this nationalist conviction remained with him during the years 1945-50. In 1950, for instance, he reported the development in the Medan congregation in the context of the general political context. He referred in a positive manner to the struggle for independence and “the freedom of the people.” But he also warned against what he thought was excessive nationalism:

There are also dangers that are connected with the struggle for independence. A national Pharisaism arises, which is the conviction that only this people is elected by God. The second is national chauvinism which means the conviction that ... this people is superior to other peoples, as if it was God who had elected that people.

99 This is the most likely interpretation of the phrase “... nationalism and a fanaticism that was overflowing.”
100 Ind./Bat. “kemerdekaan ni bangso”.
101 Bat. “Adong do tutu parnaraan songop siala perjuangan kemerdekaan i, timbul ma rationaal fariezeisme - lapatana panghilalaan holan bangsona i do bangso na pinillit ni Debata; na paduahon, nationaal chauvinisme - lapatna ... panghilalaan na sumunung bangsona na i sian angka bangso; na asing, gabe songon Debata nama dietong bangsona i.” T. S. Sihombing, Bericht Medan 1950. HKBP archives.
Sihombing furthermore seems to have been concerned about the well-being of the parishioners, regardless of their political sympathies. He said, for example, that they were "like a ball that is tossed around by politicians."  

From these examples, it appears that Sihombing was a cautious nationalist who actively supported the struggle to free his Church from the domination of westerners. On the other hand, he was a minister whose duty was to serve a congregation. This implied that his own political views had to be placed second to his practical pastoral engagement. In view of his friendly attitude to de Kleine, he thought that there was no problem in co-operating with the former Dutch RMG missionaries. If they were willing to work within the framework of the HKBP, respecting the Church’s independence, they were welcome to do so.

With regard to the relation between de Kleine and T. S. Sihombing, the Dutch missionary had previously worked at the seminary in Sipoholon. It is therefore almost certain that he and Sihombing had met between 1940, when Sihombing returned to Tapanuli for ordination, and 1942 when de Kleine was interned. It is not likely that they had established a personal relation at the time, but they were at least acquainted with one another.

The situation in 1945 was radically different from that in 1942. The HKBP had managed to survive the Japanese period without any help from abroad and T. S. Sihombing was no longer simply a young, albeit well-educated, minister. He had become a pragmatic Church leader and had been a key person in the HKBP contacts with the Japanese authorities. Furthermore, de Kleine did not have a formal position in the Church any longer. In relation to Sihombing, he could not command respect simply by virtue of being a European missionary. Owing to his nationality, he could not travel outside the area occupied by the Dutch in and around Medan but had to rely on Sihombing for information and contacts with the rest of North Sumatra.

In September 1946, Sihombing contacted de Kleine to discuss the situation of the HKBP schools. They had been nationalised by the Japanese authorities and, because of the general stress on education, the issue was of paramount importance to the HKBP. Sihombing conveyed the wishes of the HKBP that the schools should be transferred to the Church. He said that the Republican authorities in Tapanuli had suggested that the schools could be transferred to the HKBP, provided that the Batak Nias Mission gave its consent. Sihombing certainly

103 De Kleine to Home Board, Medan 8 December 1945. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
104 De Kleine to Home Board, Medan 23 September 1946. De Kleine refers only to "the Mission" (de Zending), but in this case it must be interpreted as referring to the Batak Nias Mission.
brought up the issue of the HKBP schools, because he thought that the Dutch missionaries could influence the Dutch authorities in Jakarta. The reference to the attitude of the local Republican administration was certainly intended to urge the Dutch authorities not to appear less friendly to the Church than their adversaries.

During the meeting with de Kleine, Sihombing also pointed out that one main problem for the HKBP was "... the confusion and disruption of the youth because of the political events ...". He also highlighted the dangers that he thought were represented by Islam and Catholicism and hoped for support to avert them. The most interesting "danger" from the political point of view was "the confusion and disruption of the youth because of the political events". This phrase referred to young Toba who adopted a radical nationalist position and had joined the armed laskyar groups. With regard to the general importance attached to the moral and religious role of Christian education, these "dangers" were obviously highlighted as part of the argument to convince the Dutch missionary that the schools had to be transferred to the HKBP.

In mid-October 1946, Sihombing had another meeting with de Kleine, at which he conveyed the message of Justin Sihombing that the HKBP wanted to take over responsibility for the schools and that they had severe problems at the hospitals. They had no doctors, instruments or medicine. For the moment, however, the Ephorus was only interested in knowing whether the mission was prepared to co-operate with the independent HKBP, thereby laying the foundation for further co-operation. From this statement, it is obvious that J. Sihombing was cautious and hesitant in his contacts with the Dutch missionaries. First and foremost, he wanted to safeguard the independence of the HKBP from Dutch interests. De Kleine and T. S. Sihombing also made plans for a meeting in Pematang Siantar, at the time under Republican control, between J. Sihombing and a representative of the Batak Nias Mission. For the time being, it was, however, not possible to arrange such a meeting.

From these developments, it appears that de Kleine and T. S. Sihombing did not have very close contact, even though they sometimes met to discuss the development of the HKBP. Sihombing intended to make use of de Kleine to bring about the return of the schools to the HKBP, while de Kleine tried to contact the HKBP leadership through Sihombing.

105 "... vorwarring en ontwrichting der jeugd onder invloed der politieke gebeutenissen ..."
The congregation under Dutch supervision

The large Toba exodus from Medan in late 1946 had the effect that T. S. Sihombing also left. 109 It is not known how long he stayed away from Medan, but it is likely that he spent most of the time in Jakarta and did not return until 1949. 110 Later in this chapter, I shall show that he during the period was also active in international ecumenism.

When Sihombing had left the city, de Kleine continued to try to establish contact with the HKBP leadership in Tapanuli, but at least by February 1947 his efforts had not been successful. 111 In this situation, de Kleine took over Sihombing's duties. "With the permission from and on the suggestion of the church council" he moved to the former missionaries' house beside the church. 112 It is uncertain whether there was a complete church council at the time and it is likely that de Kleine had met with some of the members of the council to make the arrangement. He was in any case allowed to work in the congregation and was now de facto the leader of the HKBP congregation.

De Kleine did not mention that Sihombing had asked him to take over the duty, something that one might have expected him to have done, had it occurred. 113 The Dutch missionary appears to have taken over the duty without previous consultation with Sihombing, let alone the central leadership of the HKBP. Because he was the only minister who knew the Toba Batak language and had previous contacts with the HKBP, de Kleine thought that it was fitting that he should step in to lead the HKBP in Medan. In his view it was a natural follow-up of his engagement in the HKBP before 1942, and the political situation made it almost impossible to recruit a minister from Tapanuli. This view was certainly shared by the remaining members of the church council. The Dutch missionary, for in-

---

110 In July 1947, he attended ecumenical meetings abroad, but he left from Jakarta. He said that he was quite unwilling to leave from there because his wife was sick. Sihombing 1965, p. 18. In August the same year, de Kleine and a colleague visited Dutch-occupied Pematang Siantar and did not report anything about T. S. Sihombing. In January 1948, Sihombing was present in Jakarta for ecumenical activities. It was not before October 1949, when he took part in an ecumenical conference in Medan, that he was back in the city. These events will be discussed later in this chapter. It is likely that he spent most of 1947 and 1948 in Jakarta and returned to Medan, like many other Toba, after the Dutch had spread into Tapanuli in December 1948. In his autobiographical sketch, Sihombing 1965, he does not explicitly say that he left Medan, except to attend international ecumenical meetings. Another indication that he returned in 1949 is that the only report that is preserved from him in the HKBP archives for the years 1945-50 is the one from 1949-50.
111 De Kleine to Home Board, 10 February 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
113 De Kleine would, in a situation in which missionaries intended to respect the independence of the HKBP, have pointed this out to his superiors in the Netherlands.
stance, reported that he had constant good relations with the local leaders. It is not known what Sihombing thought about the arrangement. In his autobiographical sketch, he does not mention that he left Medan while a Dutch missionary took over. It might have been embarrassing for him to admit that he had left his post in the hands of a Dutch missionary.

De Kleine took on the task of conducting services for the remaining Toba and each Sunday held five services in different parts of town. He also became the minister who worked in the camp where captives from the nationalist side were interned. He reports that he was happy to have the opportunity to make contacts with the “enemy” side. Since de Kleine himself writes “enemy” enclosed in brackets, it seems that he was keen to distance himself from the official Dutch rhetoric of war and maintain contacts with the Republican side, if it could benefit his work.

Apart from prisoners of war, de Kleine also had contacts with a very different kind of person from the Republican side, namely Amir Sjarifuddin, the socialist HKBP member and in 1946 Defence Minister of the Indonesian Government.

When Sjarifuddin visited Medan in late 1946, the Dutch missionary managed to arrange a meeting. According to de Kleine, “I could in a pretty manner discuss with him various issues pertaining to the future of the HKBP.” Sjarifuddin himself suggested that they should remain in contact. It is likely that the contents of their discussions included the future relations between the HKBP and the Republican authorities, the question of how to return schools to the HKBP and possibly the relations between the RMG and the HKBP.

Sjarifuddin might have realised that, for the moment, de Kleine was an important person who was well informed about the situation in the Dutch-controlled area around Medan and about the attitude of the Dutch authorities towards Churches in general and the HKBP in particular. Because some competition existed between the two rival administrations about allowing schools to return to the HKBP, it is possible that Sjarifuddin wanted to obtain information about the position of the local Dutch authorities on the “school question”. De Kleine could have explained his contact with the Republican Defence Minister by saying that

---

114 De Kleine to Home Board, 10 February 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
115 De Kleine to Home Board, 10 February 1947. Dit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
116 "Ik kon allerlei vraagstucken aangaande de toekomst der Batakkerk op een prettige manier met hem bespreken."
117 De Kleine to Home Board, 10 February 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra. This visit of Sjarifuddin to Medan is not referred to in the available literature. About Sjarifuddin, de Kleine uses the expression “during his latest visit” (“bij zijn laatste bezoek”) and since this meeting must have been thought of as quite special, de Kleine would have mentioned it in his previous letters, for example, the one written in October 1946, had they met during Sjarifuddin’s visit to Medan in April.
he wanted to gain information on the attitude of the Republican authorities towards the HKBP. If the Republican side did win the war, he and other Dutch missionaries would need their goodwill to be allowed to work in Indonesia.

De Kleine and Sjarifuddin did not meet again. In July 1947, Sjarifuddin became Prime Minister of Indonesia, but his cabinet fell in January 1948 after the first Dutch police action and the Renville agreement. In December 1948, he was killed by the Indonesian Army after having supported the Communist rebellion in Madiun from September to October 1948.118

The Dutch expansion in June 1947 had the effect that de Kleine tried to establish contacts with HKBP members in Pematang Siantar. In August 1947, he and another Dutch missionary, the Rev. Bos, had visited the city three times. They used the only means available to them to travel inland, i.e. taking part in Dutch military convoys. During their first visit, they had not seen any people in the street, but on the third occasion they could even visit people at home. On the other hand, people were reportedly careful not to meet them in public, even though many did welcome them. The HKBP church was filled with people and even some Dutch military men attended worship there. The missionaries had decided to go there once every week.119

Like the Catholic missionaries mentioned in a previous section, the two Dutchmen stayed at the Siantar Hotel, together with Dutch military officers. But they were eager to find another place to stay, because "It is always our intention in our daily work to distance ourselves from them."120 They tried to find a house to stay in, and some Toba helped them in their efforts. The former house of the western missionaries was occupied by the local HKBP minister, and the Dutch missionaries did not want to ask if they could occupy the house.121

The missionaries were obviously sensitive to the political context in which they were working and showed willingness to distance themselves from the Dutch armed forces. They also recognised that it would not be wise to try and use their missionary authority as before in relation to Toba ministers. They were also able to establish contact with the community, even though the Toba recognised that it could be dangerous to do so. Many of them very likely took the same attitude as the local leadership of the HKBP in Medan, namely that western missionaries were welcome as long as they did not aspire to take over from the Toba leadership. Some might have preserved their reverence for foreign missionaries, in so

118 Ricklefs 1982, pp. 213ff
119 De Kleine to Kappner, 1 August 1947. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
120 "Het is steeds ons streven om ons hiervan in ons dagelijkse werk zoveel mogelijk te distantiëren."
far as they were thought to have more sabala than Toba clergy, making them more profitable to associate with.

Problems of communication between East Sumatra and Tapanuli. The local leadership of the HKBP East Sumatra District, based in Pematang Siantar, had, before the Dutch expansion into the area, expected that negotiations between the HKBP and the Republican authorities would mean that the schools in the area would soon be returned to the District. In fact, they were waiting to attend a meeting at which the Republican authorities were expected to give permission for former mission schools in the area to be turned over to the HKBP.\textsuperscript{122} They had offered a 60% subsidy if the HKBP would contribute the rest.\textsuperscript{123} Two days before the meeting, on 29 July, Dutch forces reached Pematang Siantar. This development made further negotiations impossible.\textsuperscript{124}

The arrival of the Dutch missionaries in Pematang Siantar soon after that meant that the District could turn around and start negotiating with the Dutch authorities instead. On 10 and 17 December 1947, de Kleine and Bos attended meetings in Pematang Siantar with the clergy of the HKBP District and the separate HKBP-Simalungun District. The main problem discussed was the position of the former mission schools. The leading minister of the district, I. Tambunan, who had succeeded T. S. Sihombing as Praeses, said that \textquote{the Rhenish Mission (should) transfer the schools by means of the Rev. de Kleine and the Rev. Bos to the HKBP.}\textsuperscript{125} Because the HKBP had not formally obtained the ownership of the schools from the RMG, the statement should be interpreted as meaning that the Dutch missionaries had assured the clergy that the RMG did not object to them taking over the former RMG schools in the area. The Praeses also \textquote{waited for confirmation from the Mission Consul in Batavia and those who are responsible for it there.}\textsuperscript{126}

The meeting acknowledged that formally it was the Ephorus of the HKBP who would have authority over the schools, but because of the problems of communicating with Tarutung, the Praeses of the district was elected \textquote{representative of the Ephorus} (Ind. wakil Ephorus). The schools would eventually be run by the School Board, of which Tambunan, de Kleine, two teachers and another lay person were members.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{122} Tambunan, Bericht HKBP Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives
\textsuperscript{123} Nyhus 1987, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{124} Nyhus 1978, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{125} Bat. \textquote{Rynsche Zending do na pasahaton sikola i marhite sian Pd. de Kleine dt Pandita Bos.-tu HKBP.} Tambunan, Bericht ni HKBP Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives.
\textsuperscript{126} Bat. \textquote{Sipaimaon mä hasasaut ni i sian Zendingsconsul na di Batavia dohot sian na markewajiwan taringot tusi.} Tambunan, Bericht ni HKBP Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives.
\textsuperscript{127} Tambunan, Bericht District Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives.
The East Sumatra District, with the help of the Dutch missionaries, from then on negotiated separately with the Dutch administration. The authorities soon accepted the claims of the district. Presumably the administration was eager to establish good relations with the local HKBP community in the territory they controlled. In October 1948, the District secured its rights to the schools, but they were not transferred to the HKBP central organisation, only to the East Sumatra District.128

These events show that the leadership of the East Sumatra District was pleased to co-operate with the Dutch missionaries on the school issue, an issue they thought was of the utmost importance. Co-operation did, however, not stop there. De Kleine was included in the district leadership, made up of Praeses Tambunan, himself and a teacher, A. Panggabean.129 It seems that the District acted of its own accord in accepting the Dutch missionaries, regardless of the opinions of the leaders in Tarutung.130 The inclusion of the Dutch missionary in the small leadership of the District organisation certainly reflects the important role that the District assigned to him and his colleague, regarding negotiations with the Dutch authorities. It also shows the respect that he was given as a missionary, minister and leader of the Medan congregation.

At the time when the East Sumatra District agreed to work with the Dutch missionaries, the HKBP central leadership was hesitant to accept foreign missionaries and negative to those of Dutch nationality. In April 1948, Dr. Schepper from the Dutch Mission Council managed to travel to Pearaja to inquire if they would again receive Dutch and Rhenish Mission personnel.131 In Pearaja, he got the answer from Ephorus Sihombing that the HKBP had learned to work with what they had and did not need the support of the Council. The nationality of the missionary clearly influenced Sihombing. The HKBP had a month earlier accepted an Indian medical doctor, D. R. Williams, as a missionary. He had not figured in past missionary history or in the present political conflict.132 His presence on Sumatra was the outcome of an initiative of the Lutheran World Federation. They had in 1947 sent J. Sandegren, a Swedish Lutheran bishop in India, to

128 Nyhus 1987, p. 254. This was formally done in October 1948, when the HKBP received a formal statement from the RMG in Germany that they agreed that all mission property should be transferred to the Batak Church. In June and October 1948, the Dutch administration, after the intervention of the Dutch Mission Consul, suspended its claim to RMG property on Sumatra on the basis that it had been “enemy property”. Nyhus 1987, p. 255, footnotes 20 and 21.
129 Tambunan, Bericht District Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives.
130 See also Nyhus 1987, p. 181.
131 Schepper had been a teacher of prominent nationalist Batak, for example, Amir Sjarifuddin, which, despite his nationality, helped him to obtain permission to travel from the Republican authorities.
132 Nyhus 1987, p. 182.
Jakarta in an attempt to make contact with the HKPB. Sandegren met with several prominent Toba in Jakarta, but he was only able to write a letter to Ephorus Sihombing that the Toba would try to deliver. After having encountered the general hostility towards westerners in Indonesia, also among the Toba that he met, Sandegren opted to send a non-westerner there. He managed to persuade Williams, who was living in the bishop’s headquarters, to become a missionary on Sumatra. He was able to enter the island assisted by the Republican authorities on Java.133

The eagerness of the East Sumatra District to co-operate with the Dutch missionaries and administrators had the effect that a negative image was formed in Republican territory of HKBP leaders in Dutch-controlled areas. In the tense political situation, it was suspected that the members of the East Sumatra District were in fact supporters of the Dutch political interests in Indonesia, including the East Sumatra State! Consequently, the Republican authorities forbade representatives from Java and East Sumatra to attend the HKBP Synod of November 1948. They feared that these delegates would voice anti-Republican sentiments.134 There was certainly a group of pro-Dutch Toba in Medan and East Sumatra, but it seems that the local HKBP leadership had accepted Dutch missionaries in their midst for pragmatic reasons, not because they were necessarily pro-Dutch politically.135 When the Dutch military forces had invaded Tapanuli, the HKBP leadership were after all also negotiating with the Dutch authorities over the school issue, just as the East Sumatra District had done previously. Presumably they got the blessing of the Republican leaders, sympathetic to their demands, to do so.136 On the other hand, the HKBP leadership in Tarutung would suspect the leaders of the East Sumatra District because, without consulting the central leadership, they had associated themselves with Dutch missionaries. The central leadership thought that before 1942 they had had a dubious role in relation to the independent HKBP.

134 Nyhus 1987, p. 146.
135 In his report, Tambunan calls the period after the Japanese occupation “the period that is called the period of Independence” (Bat. tingki na ginoaran ni tingki Merdeka). His report is written in a rather neutral tone but describes the vicissitudes that happened to ”our people” (Bat. halak bita) during the Dutch ”police action”. Tambunan, Bericht District Sumatra Timur 1947. HKBP archives. Before the section of the report that deals with the visits of de Kleine and Bos, he says that the Catholics had opened churches and schools in East Sumatra and not the HKBP. Presumably, to include this section in his report was his way of saying that he was only actively trying to ”fight the Catholics” when he co-operated with the Dutch missionaries and did not support the Dutch political interests in the area.
136 Nyhus 1987, pp. 256f.
Relations with the central leadership were restored only in August 1949, when Ephorus Sihombing visited the East Sumatra and Simalungun Districts.137

As for T. S. Sihombing he appears to have returned to Medan sometime before October 1949.138 His arrival implied that he resumed authority over the HKBP congregation from de Kleine. Because Sihombing had been engaged in ecumenical activities with the blessing of the central leadership, his presence in Medan would have been one factor that made it easier to restore good relations within the HKBP.

Ecumenical co-operation in Medan

A new context for ecumenism

After the end of World War II, new ecumenical initiatives were taken on the international level to foster co-operation and spiritual unity among the Churches, including the Churches in the new nations of the Third World. In July 1947, a conference of the International Missionary Council was held at Whitby in Canada and in August 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded in Amsterdam. Another important meeting was the Second World Conference of Christian Youth in Oslo, Norway, in July 1947, which was sponsored by a large number of ecumenical youth organisations. The Asian Christians were said to have "... made a lasting impact and the most vigorous impression of all continents."139 In 1947, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was founded in Lund, Sweden. There were also efforts to increase regional ecumenical ties and in December 1949, the first Eastern Asia Christian Conference was held in Bangkok.140 An important example of ecumenical work in Asia is also the Church of South India, founded in 1947, when Christians from three different denominations decided to merge into a unified Church.

In Indonesia, Church leaders started to plan for a national council of Churches and in May 1950 the Indonesian Council of Churches (Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia, DGI) was inaugurated in Jakarta.141 Individual Churches in Indonesia

137 Nyhus 1987, p. 146.
138 In that month, he participated in an ecumenical meeting in Medan that will be discussed in the next section.
141 Jerih dan Juang 1979, p. 573.
also established contacts with organisations based on a confessional identity. In the late 1940s, the HKBP established contacts with, and eventually joined, the Lutheran World Federation.142 When local ecumenical activities in Medan started anew in the late 1940s, these activities meant that ecumenical co-operation had received a new context and impetus.

There were on Sumatra, on the other hand, factors that worked against the efforts towards more co-operation between the Churches. The Toba leaders of the HKBP, by and large, continued to regard their Church as the original Batak Church. The independent Batak Churches, such as Mission Batak and Huria Kristen Batak, the latter in 1946 renamed Huria Kristen Indonesia, were labelled “sectarians”.143 The Japanese period had seen some examples of co-operation within the framework of the Japanese policies with regard to religion. This kind of co-operation had, however, to a large extent been forced. After 1945, some efforts were made to build greater unity between the HKBP and these Churches. But they generally stopped short of HKBP demands that the other Churches should “confess their sins”.144 It is also reasonable to assume that the leaders of the smaller Churches feared that their organisations would just be “swallowed” by the larger Church.

The return to the HKBP of ministers who had joined the independent Churches in the 1920s and 1930s was also controversial. When Willy Sinaga, the former minister in Medan, applied to be reinstated in office in 1949 in Pematang Siantar, the local leadership of the HKBP did not accept his application.145 Sinaga had lived in Pematang Siantar and was known there as a minister of one of the independent Churches. The local HKBP congregations were not prepared to acc-

---

142 Nyhus 1987, pp. 180f. In 1948 Bishop Sandegren had met with Toba delegates at the WCC Assembly in Amsterdam. They decided that he should travel to Sumatra in order to connect the HKBP with the LWF. From Medan, he and the American F. Schoitz managed to enter Republican territory and the Swedish bishop claimed that he once escaped a lasjar force only because he looked like Nommensen. J. Sandegren, Batakkyrkan på Sumatra. Några personliga intryck och ihågkomster (The Batak Church. on Sumatra. Some personal impressions and recollections). J. Sandegren collection: Y Resa t. Indonesien 1961. CSM. The outcome of their meeting with the leadership of the HKBP was that the Church joined the LWF in 1952 after having formulated its own confession. The confession deliberately avoided European issues that the HKBP did not regard as relevant. See Shreiner 1966.

143 For the new name, Huria Kristen Indonesia, see Tampubolon 1978, pp. 129f.

144 It was not until the 1960s that the HKBP accepted these Churches as valid. Nyhus 1987, pp. 185ff.

145 Parahalado ni HKBP P Siantar to Ephorus HKBP, 5 April 1949. HKBP archives. It is likely that Sinaga thought that, when the HKBP had got rid of the missionary leadership, he had no hard feelings towards the Church and wanted to return. To be sure, it was also not possible to obtain a regular salary as a pastor within the independent Churches and, as it was difficult to obtain other employment during wartime, there might also have been financial reasons behind Sinaga’s initiative.
cept someone whom they regarded as a long-term adversary into their flock. Sinaga then turned to the headquarters of the HKBP, where his application was eventually accepted, with or without the consent of the HKBP leadership in Pematang Siantar.\footnote{Kantor Besar HKBP to Tuan Pd Willy Sinaga di P Siantar, Tarutung 21 September 1949. HKBP archives.}

Relations between the HKBP and the Methodist Church after 1945 were occasionally tense, because the comity agreements between the two Churches from colonial times were not thought to be valid. The HKBP did not see any reason to limit their activities to Tapanuli and Simalungun. Toba who had become Methodists because of migration to the east coast sometimes wanted their congregations to join the HKBP. In 1947, the Præses of the East Coast District of the HKBP, for instance, reported that the Toba Methodist congregation in Kisaran, together with the Huria Kristen Indonesia congregation in the same town, wanted to return to the HKBP.\footnote{Tambunan to J. Sihombing, 21 March 1947. HKBP archives.}

Methodist missionaries who urged the HKBP to respect the comity agreements made before 1942 could obtain little positive response and the standard answer was “We are free now”.\footnote{Bat. “nunga merdekd”, Alm 1953, p. 28.} On the other hand, the HKBP objected when for example the Methodist Church wanted to establish congregations in Tapanuli, referring to the fact that the Methodist Church was entering “the area of the HKBP.”\footnote{Nyhus 1987, p. 189. Nyhus refers to the HKBP Synod minutes of 1951, but they deal with negotiations that had been in progress for some time.} The example demonstrates that the HKBP leaders had preserved the missionary ideal of a corporate unity of Church and territory, an ideal that excluded other Churches.

Also during this period the division between Protestantism and Catholicism appears to have been taken for granted by its local representatives on Sumatra. The effect was that co-operation over “the great divide” was not perceived as a serious option. With regard to the HKBP, which had taken pains to get rid of the dominance of Europeans, the negative attitude was reinforced by the fact that Dutch Capuchins continued to remain the main authorities in the Catholic Church in North Sumatra.

\section*{T. S. Sihombing and ecumenical co-operation in Medan}

The available literature claims that a Christian Council on Sumatra (Majelis Kristen di Sumatra) was founded in Medan in 1949.\footnote{Jerib dan Juang 1979, p. 572. Nyhus 1987, p. 183.} One source claims that it was
founded early that year. Nyhus asserts that, because political conditions prevented the formation of a national organisation until 1950, the Churches formed regional councils first. These statements give the impression that quite stable organisations were founded. The following discussion will show that this impression is wrong, at least as regards North Sumatra. The efforts were much more premature than these authors indicate.

There is not much documentation on the ecumenical situation in Medan during the period 1945-50. During the war and the attendant confusion, ecumenical co-operation was not perceived as an important concern. Personal safety and how to obtain the daily necessities of life were more important. Ecumenical co-operation in Medan after 1945 started only towards the end of the war of independence, when the political and military situation was more stable.

On 10-12 October 1949, an ecumenical conference for clergy working in East Sumatra (Konperensi Pendeta di S.Timur) was held at the Chinese Methodist Church on Hakkastraat (the present Jalan Let. Jen. M. T. Haryono) in Medan. The participants included Indonesians, such as T. S. Sihombing, T. Sibero from the GBKP and J. A. Manuputty from the Protestantsche Kerk. A group of western ministers and missionaries was also present. They included R. Alm and W. Klaus from the Methodist mission, W. C. de Jong of the Protestantsche Kerk, L. Korvinus from the Gereformeerde congregation, and D. Solinger from the NZG who worked among the Karo Batak. Apart from these ministers, at least one lay person was present in the form of the PARKI founder, Saladin Sarumpaet. The man in this group who at the time had most experience of ecumenical work was T. S. Sihombing. Even during the Japanese period, he had been a representative of all Protestant Christians in relation to the Japanese authorities. In 1947, he had been one of the two Indonesian delegates at the conference of the International Missionary Council in Whitby, the other being W. J. Rumambi. In the same year, Sihombing also participated at the student conference in Oslo, Norway, and in 1949 he represented the HKBP in the Eastern Asia Christian

---

152 Jerih dan Juang 1979, p. 572.
155 D. Solinger mentions that a Sarumpaet with the title of doktorandus (a postgraduate degree below the doctoral level) was present at the meeting. D. Solinger to Missionsdirektor, Kabanjahe October 1949. Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra. It is almost certain that this person was Saladin Sarumpaet.
Conference in Bangkok. Even though communication with the HKBP headquarters in Tapanuli was difficult, Sihombing was appointed to represent the HKBP at these meetings. His comparatively advanced education and the fact that he had left Tapanuli for Jakarta, where it was easier to travel abroad, were most likely the reasons behind his appointment.

One can draw the conclusion that the HKBP minister in Medan during the late 1940s was one of the few Indonesians who had experience of international ecumenical activities. T. S. Sihombing continued to be active in international ecumenical work and in 1961, when he was serving as the General Secretary of the HKBP, he was elected to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

Sihombing also played a crucial role in ecumenical work in Indonesia. He was one of three persons who in January 1948 met in Jakarta to prepare for the founding of a national Council of Churches. Sihombing is said to have represented the Christians of Sumatra, while Rev. Probowinoto and W. J. Rumambi, who had made up the Indonesian delegation in Whitby, together with Sihombing, represented the Christians on Java and in eastern Indonesia respectively. The idea that Sihombing represented Sumatra and the other two delegates other parts of Indonesia could also be seen as a symbolic indication that the whole of Indonesia had come together at the meeting. It is possible that the three of them happened to be present on Java at the time.

In what way Sihombing was chosen as a representative of the Christians on Sumatra or how he was informed about the meeting is unclear. The idea of taking part in this meeting could have been a private initiative on the part of Sihombing if the political situation did not enable him to contact the leadership in Tarutung. In this case, the idea that he represented Sumatra meant that he was a prominent Christian from Sumatra who had close contacts with the Churches, at least in North Sumatra. During the Japanese period, Sihombing also had a similar experience when he represented the Christians in Medan without having been formally elected by the local Christian congregations.

---

156 Jeri dan Juang 1979, p. 572. Nyhus 1987, p. 180. At the conference in Amsterdam, the HKBP was represented by Rev. K. Sitompul. Like T. S. Sihombing, he was a graduate of the HTS in Jakarta. Nyhus 1987, pp. 159, 180.


158 Information about the month in which the meeting took place comes from Jeri dan Juang 1979, p. 572. The place of the meeting is not mentioned in the available documentation. Jakarta was to be the capital of Indonesia and its centre of ecumenism. It is therefore likely that the literature did not bother to mention that the meeting took place in the most “natural” place.

159 Nababan 1980, p. 10.
At the meeting in Jakarta, the small group decided to form an “Investigating Committee” (Panitia Perancang) to plan for a conference at which the founding of an Indonesian Ecumenical Council would be prepared (Konperensi Persiapan Pembentukan DGI). These efforts by T. S. Sihombing resulted in his being regarded as one of the “founding fathers” of the Indonesian Council of Churches. Sihombing was certainly one of the persons that R. Alm had in mind when he wrote: “It was ... the Japanese occupation that brought forward national leaders in the Churches of Indonesia. Some of them were called to Whitby and Amsterdam and came home dedicated to ecumenics.”

Bearing in mind T. S. Sihombing’s ecumenical experiences, it is highly likely that he was one of the initiators of the ecumenical meeting in Medan in 1949. Furthermore, he was responsible for the first discussion on the agenda entitled “The meaning of the World Council of Churches” (Ind. Artinya Majelis Gereja2 se-Dunia). In his speech, he advocated the cause of ecumenism and protested against the separation of the Protestant Churches. The argument was clearly in line with the vision of a unified Protestant Church that he and other young persons dedicated to ecumenics in Indonesia shared at the time. Sihombing presumably also related his ecumenical experiences, including the plans for an Indonesian Council of Churches that he was involved in. The fact that this theme was the first of the conference shows that it was a direct consequence of the formation of the WCC and the preparations to found the DGI, two processes in which Sihombing had taken part. The meeting could then be seen as a way of starting to implement the spirit of ecumenical co-operation in a local setting.

The other themes at the conference were “Theology of the Sacraments” (Sacraments Theologie) led by W. C. de Jong, “Church and Sects” (Kerk en Sekten) led by J. A. Maniputty, and “Christianity and Nationalism”, (Ind. Agama kristen dan nationalism), a discussion led by R. Alm.
The theme of "Church and Sects" served to underpin the identity of mainline Protestantism, to which all the participants belonged, by contrasting them with other Protestant alternatives, the "sects". These included groups such as the Pentecostals and the Adventists, and the independent Churches, such as Huria Kristen Indonesia and Mission Batak. With regard to De Jong's speech, some participants found it interesting, although not all understood it because it was held in Dutch.\textsuperscript{168}

In view of the political situation at the time, the theme "Christianity and Nationalism" was, however, the most interesting. It was presented by Ragnar Alm who had worked in the region since 1931 and was able to stay on there even during the Japanese period. During the period 1945-50, Alm stayed most of the time in Medan. He thus had experience from the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese occupation and the period of conflict between the Republican and the Dutch forces. He was also engaged in ecumenical co-operation and took part in the meeting to prepare for the founding of the Indonesian Council of Churches in November 1949. On that occasion, he was one of only two westerners who were present.\textsuperscript{169} His participation in this meeting was presumably, at least partly, a consequence of the conference in Medan.

The issue of the relations between Christianity and nationalism was obviously important to Alm at the time. A few years later, in 1953, his short volume entitled \textit{Missionen och Nationalismen} (Mission and Nationalism) was published in Sweden. In this book, Alm distinguished between a "... sober and sane nationalism and nationalism when it tends to become a substitute for religion."\textsuperscript{170} In his examples of unethical nationalism, he took up the nationalistic reformers in ancient Israel, such as Esther, Josiah and Joel, who claimed that the foreigners in the country were enemies of God, that the nation should be purified and these enemies exterminated. He also mentioned Fascism, Nazism and Japanese Shinto and the cult of the Emperor. He had come to know the latter personally during the Japanese occupation.\textsuperscript{171}

He also thought that nationalism could cause problems for the Churches of Indonesia. In this respect, he referred to his own experience in the preparation and the formation of the Indonesian Council of Churches. Although he understood that Indonesians now wanted to rule the ecumenical organisations themselves, he regretted that Indonesian Christians did not want to include any...
westerners in the ecumenical council. According to him, the danger was that the international aspect of Christianity could be lost.\textsuperscript{172}

He also made the practical suggestion that, for the time being, the Indonesian Churches could not manage without some assistance from abroad. The main task for these Churches was to continue the mission work and counter the possible growing influence of Islam in Indonesian society.\textsuperscript{173} He explicitly warned against Muslim groups that wanted Indonesia to become an Islamic state. In this context, he referred to a book in which a prominent Muslim referred to the strong position of the State Churches in Scandinavia, especially Sweden, and argued that it was time for Muslims to do the same in Indonesia.\textsuperscript{174}

On the other hand, despite his strong emphasis on the international character of Christianity, Alm was clearly positive to nationalism that did not exclude international co-operation. He claimed that

... the form of internationalism that willingly admits national differences and the right of nations to a national life, and tries to build bridges between nations is something that the world needs today. Furthermore, both the Old and the New Testament support this kind of internationalism where human dignity and the right to independence is clearly emphasised.\textsuperscript{175}

With regard to Indonesia, Alm claimed that he had personal experience that made him sympathetic to the nationalist feelings of Indonesians.\textsuperscript{176} He also pointed out that the idea of autonomous Churches in the new nations had a nationalist component and that no one could oppose the strivings of indigenous Christians who themselves wanted full responsibility for their Churches. As for the role of foreign missionaries, he claimed that "even if it was more convenient before the war, all missionaries are happy to work in a free and independent nation. The suspicion that the missionaries run the errands of imperialism are gone."\textsuperscript{177} He also saw encouraging signs among the Christians that pointed towards a sound nationalism. He referred to one of the statutes of the PARKINDO that said that

\textsuperscript{172} As a Methodist, Alm belonged to a denomination that since the beginning of its existence has stressed its international and ecumenical character.

\textsuperscript{173} Alm 1953, pp. 23ff.

\textsuperscript{174} Alm 1953, p. 21. As a Swedish Methodist, it was natural for him to be critical of the system with a Lutheran State Church that was in place in his home country.

\textsuperscript{175} "... den internationalism som villigt erkänner de nationella olikheterna och de olika nationernas rätt till ett eget nationellt liv och som söker bygga broar mellan nationernerna (äti) något som världen behöver idag. Både GT och NT ger för övrigt stöd åt en sådan internationalism, där människovärdet betonas och rätten till självstyre klart markeras." Alm 1953, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{176} In this context he refers to a meeting with a Dutch teacher at a plantation who thought that it was easier to make their dogs learn something than the children of the plantation workers. Alm 1953, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{177} "Även om det var bekvämare förut så är alla missionärer nu glad åt att få verka i en fri och självständig nation. Misstanken att de går imperialismens ärenden är borta." Alm 1953, p. 33.
the party should work for brotherhood between peoples. From his book, Alm appears as a Christian internationalist with sympathies for the rights of Indonesians to rule their nation and their Churches.

Alm's manuscript must have been ready at the earliest in late 1952. It is therefore difficult to say whether Alm held these convictions as early as in 1949. It is anyway likely that most of the arguments in his book featured at the conference in late 1949, at a time when it was almost certain that the actual independence of Indonesia was not far away.

How then did the Indonesian participants respond to Alm's presentation? As a moderate nationalist, Sihombing might have supported Alm's main argument. Since he himself accepted Dutch missionaries, provided that they did not lead the work in the Church, he might have supported the membership of foreign missionaries in the national, ecumenical organisation. Saladin Sarumpaet, who at the time had established PARKINDO, may as a party organiser have had difficulties in realising that the "dangers of nationalism" were imminent.

When the conference was drawing to a close, the participants agreed that they should at least meet once a year to talk about important common problems. Many of them were in theory in favour of more co-operation between the Churches but thought that at the end of the war they had more important things to attend to. They consequently did not want make any decisions that meant that they were bound to carry out a lot of ecumenical activities.

According to one of the Dutch participants, the conference also decided that "... from this conference a suggestion will be sent to the ecumenical movement about the possible founding of a Sumatra Council." These statements show that the conference was the first of its kind in Medan after 1945 and that they did not for the moment make definite plans to found a local ecumenical council. The conference was indeed just a preliminary meeting of ministers.

Concluding remarks

To the Toba in Medan, the developments in the period 1945-50 were not very different from those in the previous Japanese period, in the sense that they re-

---

178 Alm 1953, p. 23.
179 The manuscript refers to several books published in 1952 and editions of journals in August the same year.
180 D. Solinger to Home Board, Kabanjahe October 1949, Uit Brieven van Zendelingen in Sumatra.
remained a decimated community and many Toba organisations were inactive. In 1946, a large number of them left, and it was essentially the same kind of behaviour as when, as a result of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour, Toba returned to Tapanuli. The home area was considered a safer place, where it was easier to support oneself. Regardless of whether this view was true or not, the example shows that the links with Tapanuli remained strong and that the area was psychologically considered safer. The return of some of the civil servants in late 1948 demonstrates, on the other hand, that the Toba were eager to take back the ground that they had lost because of the two exoduses in 1942 and 1946. The white-collar tradition was still very much alive.

Except for the HKBP, the Christian congregations were largely inactive. The re-emergence of western missionaries still implied that local Christian leaders had to take a stand with regard to how cooperation would continue. Within the HKBP the contrasting developments in East Sumatra and the leadership in Tarutung showed that, despite the general agreement that the Toba should remain leaders of the Church, political conditions meant that some sections of the Church were more than ready to cooperate closely with the missionaries. In Medan, the Dutch regional headquarters, the local congregation was led by a Dutch missionary during most of this period. On the other hand, the efforts of de Kleine to distance himself from the official Dutch strivings show that he was conscious of the political dilemma posed by his position in Medan.

Regardless of the stand in relation to foreign missionaries, the permanently tense relations between the HKBP and the independent Churches founded in the 1920s show that the Toba had accommodated RMG perceptions. The tradition of the People's Church continued to be an element in how the HKBP perceived itself. The example of the re-established Simalungun congregation shows, however, that the ideal of the People's Church remained difficult to implement locally. The incentive to separate was certainly during this period conditioned by the rhetoric of the East Sumatra State, which stressed the rights of the “original” inhabitants in contrast to others.

With regard to Toba political activities, the trend to affiliate with the Dutch, presumably with a common Christian identity as its basis, remained important. On the other hand, it was difficult for the Toba to wholeheartedly support the federalist solution, because of the stress on the rights of indigenous inhabitants in the federal State. In the end, Toba religio-ethnic identity set them off from the rest.

Among Toba nationalists, the ideal of Christian politics became the dominant one. In opposition to the claim that Dutch and indigenous Christians should join hands, they stressed the need of Christians to support the new State. They stressed that their religious identity was entirely compatible with the nationalist
strivings. But, because Toba in the region represented by far the largest Christian ethnic group, Christian interests would correspond closely with Toba interests. Affiliation with the PARKINDO meant that the Toba took to the national scene, defending Christian interests nationwide and, simultaneously, Toba religious and ethnic interests regionally.

Despite the continuing tense relations between the HKBP and other Toba Churches and the tensions cause by the local presence of Dutch missionaries, local ecumenical work was resumed during the latter part of this period. Through the activities of T. S. Sihombing, it was connected with ecumenical developments nationally and internationally. In the case of the HKBP, these contacts held out the possibility of broadening contacts and not being dependent on Dutch or German support, as in the past. The ecumenical situation in Medan, where the incentive of the Christian minority to co-operate across denominational borders was relatively strong, clearly obtained input from these developments, at the same time as it made an independent contribution to the ecumenical efforts.
CHAPTER 8

The Toba Batak in a Post-war Metropolis (1950-65)

Introduction

In Chapter 7, the complex developments during the 1945-50 period have been analysed. Medan was then the seat of Dutch forces and the capital of the short-lived East Sumatra State. In this chapter, I shall discuss the developments between 1950 and 1965, when Medan had become an integral part of the unitary Republic of Indonesia and the capital of the province of North Sumatra. The period under study will end in 1965, the year that marks the beginning of Suharto's so-called New Order, when Indonesian politics, including the religious policies of the government, took a new turn.

In studying Toba ethno-religious identity after 1950, the main focus will be on the new social dynamics of the Toba community, congregational life and ecumenical co-operation. These developments occurred in a city that was developing into a regional metropolis, which was increasingly diversified in ethnic terms and in which the increase of the Toba community was a major feature.

This chapter will have a somewhat different character than the previous ones. The nature of the available sources and the increasing number of Toba ministers and congregations in Medan mean that the emphasis will be on general developments, illuminated by a number of concrete examples.

The main issues that will be discussed are as follows: What social changes in the Toba community could be observed from 1950? On what premises did Toba congregations develop and in what way did Churches and congregations contribute to the building up of Indonesian society? In what way did the tradition of ecumenical co-operation continue?
The development of Medan within the province of North Sumatra

The framework of modern Indonesia

After the tumultuous Japanese period and the national revolution, Medan was in 1950 incorporated into the unitary state of Indonesia when the East Sumatra State was dissolved. From 1950 to 1957, Indonesia was a parliamentary democracy with several short-lived governments. The members of parliament were initially appointed on the basis of what were thought to be the approximate strengths of the many political parties. Sukarno functioned as President and the Minangkabau Hatta as Vice-President. The two had formally only symbolic powers. The state ideology was Panca Sila, regarded by Sukarno as an umbrella philosophy, encompassing the various, political and religious interest groups of the nation. But the debates as to the rights of the orthodox Muslim community continued, centring on the status of the Jakarta Charter.

Another debate was about the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. According to Sukarno’s interpretation of Panca Sila, no religion could in Indonesia claim precedence over another. Consequently, all religions had special sections within the Ministry. Its main function after 1950 was to provide religious teachers for State schools, hospitals and prisons. These teachers were recruited from religious leaders, who would instruct their religious group separately. Opposition to the Ministry was heard from sections among both the Muslim and the Christian communities. Muslims who wanted an Islamic State opposed the Ministry for formally giving no special place to Islam, while some Christians feared that State intervention in religious affairs would threaten religious freedom.

The first general elections were held in 1955. During the election campaign, the Indonesian Council of Churches, together with PARKINDO and other Christian organisations, formed a Christian Election Committee, in order to raise support for the Protestant party. In Tapanuli, Christian leaders gave more or less open support to the party and, at least within the HKBP, on the local level, the congregational leadership and the leadership of PARKINDO largely overlapped. With regard to ethnic dynamics, the leaders of the party made efforts to project it as a national party, but, in North Sumatra, Toba dominance was evident. Occasionally, other Christian ethnic groups, such as Simalungun Batak, would also

---

1 See Chapter 7, section “Medan and the struggle for Indonesian independence”.
2 For the debate within the HKBP, see Nyhus 1987, pp. 515ff.
abandon PARKINDO for that reason. Protestants and Catholics also divided their vote, because Catholics supported their own Partai Katolik Indonesia.\(^3\)

Among the Christians in North Sumatra, the main rivals to the Christian parties were Sukarno’s PNI, supported mainly by people employed by the State, and the Communist Party (PKI). The latter gained Toba supporters on the east coast who hoped that the Party would help them to obtain land.\(^4\) The election results showed that the tradition of “Christian politics” remained the dominant political tradition among the Toba. In North Tapanuli, PARKINDO gained 65% of the votes, while the Catholic Party gained 8%. The PNI obtained only 12% and the PKI 6%.\(^5\) The implication is that after 1950 the Toba felt the need to contribute as Christians in the political sphere and thought that support for Christian parties best protected their interests as a religious minority.

Apart from the fluctuations on the central political level, there were threats to the authority of the central government. Two of the most serious ones were the Islamic Dar-ul Islam and the PRRI/Pemesta rebellions. The Dar-ul Islam movement started on Java in the 1940s and with the aim of creating an Islamic state. It was finally crushed by the Indonesian Army in 1962. In Aceh, the movement, led by the former nationalist supporter, Daud Beureu’eh, from 1953 made Aceh an area that, in practice, was beyond the control of the central government. In 1959, the Dar-ul Islam leaders in Aceh agreed to lay down their weapons. In exchange, the area was made a “Special District” (Daerah Istimewa) with self-rule in matters of religion, adat and education.

The PRRI/Pemesta was a rebellion that started in 1956 against central authority in parts of the outer islands. Its centres were in West and North Sumatra and in North Sulawesi. The rebels included Sumatra military leaders and Muslim political leaders. They were all worried about the growth of the Communist Party and the efforts of Sukarno to take more power for himself with the help of a radicalised rhetoric. Tensions between the integrity of the outer islands and the authority of the central government had existed for a long time, but after the resignation in July 1956 of the Minangkabau Vice-President Hatta the central government had lost its most prominent, non-Javanese member. Within the Army there were also conflicts between different factions.

In North Sumatra, the rebellion was led by Colonel M. Simbolon, the commanding officer in North Sumatra and a Toba. Simbolon’s move was, however, not supported by his closest military colleagues, such as the Chief of Staff, Djamin Gintings, a Karo Batak. They turned against Simbolon, who had to leave Medan

---

\(^3\) Nyhus 1987, pp. 521ff, 540.

\(^4\) Nyhus 1987, pp. 532ff.

\(^5\) Nyhus 1987, pp. 540ff.
and retreated to Tapanuli with his Toba supporters. These developments again proved that common action was difficult to mobilise in the multi-ethnic web of North Sumatra. An important factor in the lack of support for Simbolon was that many Toba migrated to the east coast after 1950, a development resented by most other ethnic groups. Even though the rebellion was generally aimed against the central authorities on Java and supported by many, diverse, non-Javanese groups, in North Sumatra it eventually appeared as a Toba rebellion.

In Tapanuli, Simbolon was joined by Saladin Sarumpaet and Julia Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat, the original founders of PARKI in Medan in 1945. In the 1950s, Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat was chairman of the HKBP women's section and chaired the Indonesian Christian Women's Association, working for women's rights in close association with PARKINDO. Her husband was chairman of the HKBP educational board and PARKINDO in Tapanuli. He became one of Simbolon's closest associates.

In 1958, the central government had crushed the main forces of the rebellion, but the main leaders remained at large until 1961. In that year, they gave up the struggle but were not severely punished. During this process, the suspicion of the Toba remained and one informant claimed that Toba Christian leaders in Pematang Siantar were temporarily detained. As an outcome of their support for Simbolon, Sarumpaet and Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat had to resign from their positions in the HKBP and PARKINDO.

From 1957 to 1965, Indonesia was led by Sukarno under the so-called "guided democracy" system, in which the President himself had extensive powers. Sukarno was trying to revive the hopes of a revolutionary change in society. To this end, he initiated the nationalisation of many foreign, mainly Dutch, business enterprises and expelled all Dutch citizens. At the same time, he tried to maintain a balance between the main power groups. They included the PKI, the largest Communist Party in Asia after the Chinese, and the Islamic groups, who wanted an Islamic state or a more Islamic society. Another main power group was the Army, which through the struggle for independence and the conflicts with Islamic and regional, armed resistance, was influential in society.

Although Sukarno, with the help of the Army, managed to handle the groups opposing the central leadership, he did not, despite his rhetorical skills, manage to unite the nation behind his slogans or restore the increasingly chaotic economy. On 30 September 1965, Leftist supporters in the Army launched a coup against

---

6 Pelzer 1982, p. 147.
7 I shall return to the issue of Toba migration later in this chapter.
8 Nyhus 1987, pp. 314, 319.
9 For the last point, see Nyhus 1987, p. 319.
the highest military leaders and six generals were killed. Later, it was publicly supported by the Communist Party, though it is likely that the Party had not masterminded the action against the military leaders. Major-General Suharto now took command of the remaining troops. He soon had control over the situation, effectively succeeded Sukarno, and banned the Communist Party. These events marked the beginning of the so-called New Order, which dominated the Indonesian political landscape until the late 1990s.

The post-war development of a regional metropolis

In 1950, the Republican leaders opted for administrative reform and made Medan the capital of the new province of North Sumatra. In this new structure, the traditional leaders, such as the sultans, had no role to play. They had lost influence as a result of the social revolution in the 1940s and been discredited by their support for the Dutch. In the 1950s, they were generally regarded as old feudal relics. The effect was that the Malay dominance on the east coast was finally ended.

The province was made up of the three former colonial residencies: Tapanuli, East Sumatra and Aceh to the north. The founding of the new province meant that three areas that until then had been administered separately and according to different models became one administrative unit. Because Medan was by far the largest city and the centre of the plantation economy on Sumatra, it was evident to everyone that no city could compete with Medan as the prospective capital of the province. In 1959, Aceh, as an effect of becoming a Special District, broke away from the province. The fact that Aceh was in turmoil during most of the 1950s implies that it was never really united with Tapanuli and East Sumatra in the province of North Sumatra.

With regard to the plantation economy, which had dominated the life of the east coast region, it had been severely affected by Japanese policies and the war from 1945 onwards. Even though some efforts were made to rebuild the plantation economy from 1945, it was only in 1950 that western companies re-invested large amounts of money to rebuild plantations. In 1957, all Dutch plantations were nationalised. They were thereafter administered by the Indonesian State and started to yield a large percentage of the national income. Commercial agriculture, in other words, remained of paramount importance to the region, but was now a means of increasing the State revenues. Medan remained its main administrative centre.

---

10 The direct cause of nationalisation was the nationalistic agitation with regard to the West Irian issue. The process that led to nationalisation is analysed in Pelzer 1982, pp. 147ff.
One of the most important and obvious aspects of the development of Medan after 1950 was the numerical growth of the population.

**Table IV. The population growth of Medan, 1930-1980**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>260,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>635,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,374,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statistics are based on Pelly 1983, p. 100, and Doojtjes 1952, p. 57. The accuracy of these figures varies. The figures for 1942 and 1951 are approximations, while that for 1980 is from the official Indonesian census and ought to be more trustworthy. In spite of these variations, these statistics should give a fairly accurate picture of the general development. The figures are rounded off to the nearest thousand.

As Table IV shows, the population in 1947 passed the pre-war figure and in 1951 it had doubled, compared with 1947. Between 1951 and 1961, the population doubled again. In 1971, it exceeded half a million, and in 1980 it was well above the one-million mark. This development meant that Medan expanded into a comparatively large city and remained by far the largest on Sumatra. Even though the population increased owing to the natural rate of increase, the main reason must be sought in migration from other areas to Medan.

Because of the massive growth of the population, the geographical build-up of the city changed dramatically. To a large extent the physical extension of the city was an unplanned development in which migrants settled wherever they were able to find land. To meet this development, the local administration changed the administrative structure of the city several times, enlarging both the number of districts (kecamatan) and the area covered by the Municipality (Kotamadya).

In 1945, the area covered by the city had not grown very much since 1930. But, in 1951, the growth of the population led the local government to extend the Municipality in all directions. The city was divided into four districts, Medan Baru, Medan Barat, Medan Timur and Medan Kota. In 1974, new areas were added to the Municipality and seven new districts were formed, while the four older ones remained intact.¹¹ The increase implied that the area of the Municipality was increased four times. It was even extended to the coast to include the harbour at Belawan, about 20 kilometres from the city centre.

¹¹ See map 8 in Pelly 1983, p. 104. In 1996, yet another structure was launched, but the area of the Municipality was not extended.
The old city centre retained its position as the administrative and commercial hub of the city. Many administrative buildings from the Dutch colonial period were taken over by the regional and municipal administration. The same applied to the offices of the former Dutch planters, which were taken over by the new, Indonesian, plantation administration. This use of former Dutch offices was still the case in the late 1990s, and Medan remained a city where many buildings dating from the colonial period could be observed.

From 1950 onwards, the city centre developed and was characterised by shopping districts, cinemas, night clubs, foreign consulates, banking complexes, private universities and hotels. The centre of prostitution in the city was along Jalan Nibung Raya. The eastern parts of the city centre remained dominated by the Chinese community, who maintained small manufacturing companies or retail stores. The central market retained its position as the largest market in Medan, though new markets from the 1950s were located outside the old centre. In the former European settlement, where many houses still remained from colonial times, wealthy Indonesians, members of the diplomatic corps and other expatriates settled.

The new districts that were incorporated in 1974 were not as densely populated as the old ones. In the central district of Medan Kota, there were in 1988 20,000 people per square kilometre, followed by Medan Timur with 16,000. On the other hand, in the new districts of Belawan, Labuhan, Deli and Tuntungan, the number of people per square kilometre was less than 4,000. Only 800 persons per square kilometre lived in Labuhan.

Outside the city centre, the housing was not dense, except for the areas near the main roads. Houses were simpler than in the city centre and often there were areas of farmland between them. Further from the main roads, farmland eventually took over, where mainly Javanese and Karo Batak peasants lived. The borders between city and countryside were very much blurred and over time the area of “true urbanism”, however it may be defined, slowly increased with the influx of new migrants. Roads were often dirt roads, and cars and vehicles not as frequent as in the city centre. Instead, becaks (bicycle rickshaws) were common. One would find some local markets, small shops and the simple local restaurant (warung). Many people in these areas worked in the centre or in the industrial zones, as manual labourers or in the informal sector. In general, the high intensity of life in the city centre was very distant.

This kind of area in Medan, as in other cities of Indonesia, is called a kampung. Literally, it means “village” and is generally used to refer to the thousands of

---

12 For a discussion of the Chinese settlements, see Pelly 1983, p. 117.
small villages in Indonesia. Using the term for an area in Medan implies that life here is more like life in the country side than in a city. Kampung also has connotations of togetherness and communality. By contrast, the city centre is referred to as “kota”, which just means “city”. A more detailed description of an area considered to be a Toba kampung is included later in this chapter.

Ethnic change in Medan 1930-88, and the pattern of ethnic settlements

Before 1942, the Dutch administration registered people’s ethnic identities. The best-known example is the census of 1930. In independent Indonesia, ethnic statistics for Indonesian citizens have not generally been assembled, because the ethnic composition of a certain area is, in general, considered a sensitive matter. At least in Medan, however, officials at the lowest administrative level (kelurahan) in the 1980s still registered the ethnic identity of a person. In 1980, the anthropologist and historian Usman Pelly used these registers to make the first ethnic statistics of Medan after the war. The research department at the HKBP University in Medan did the same in 1988. They also investigated the religious affiliations of the population. The results of these three surveys with regard to ethnic affiliation are shown in Table V.

Even though these two surveys differed on minor points, they clearly showed that a significant change in the ethnic build-up of the population occurred after 1950. The Chinese were the largest ethnic group in 1930. But even though they had increased significantly in absolute numbers, their percentage of the population in 1980 was 14%, less that half of the 1930s figure.

Instead, the Javanese, the second largest group in 1930, had become the single largest ethnic group. They represented about twice as many people as any other group or almost 30% of the total population. Because most Javanese were former plantation workers, and were generally poorly educated, they did not obtain qualified jobs. As during colonial times, they were manual and factory workers and farmers, or gained a living in the informal economic sector. Their situation was very different from the few Javanese officials, mainly military or business people, who came from Java to work in Medan. They obtained good jobs but often stayed only a couple of years in Medan. In other words, despite the fact that the Javanese represented the largest ethnic group in Medan after 1950, they were not able to transform their numerical size into equivalent political and social power.

16 Pelly 1983, p. 162.
Table V. The population in Medan divided by ethnic groups, as percentages of the total population. Based on Pelly 1993, p. 103, and Data Penduduk 1989, p. 3.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Javanese</th>
<th>Toba Batak</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Mandailing</th>
<th>Minangkabau</th>
<th>Malays</th>
<th>Karo Batak</th>
<th>Acehnese</th>
<th>Sundanese</th>
<th>Simalungun Batak</th>
<th>Dairi Batak</th>
<th>Nias</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.3 (the three groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the Sumatra Muslim ethnic groups, Mandailing and Minangkabau had after 1950 increased their percentage of the population to about 10%, while the Malays had only increased moderately, from 7 to about 8%. Of all the ethnic groups, it was, however, the Toba that showed the most dramatic increase. In 1930, they made up only 1% of the population, but in the 1980s the number had reached about 14-15%. In absolute numbers, they had increased 222 times.18

After 1950, there were six major ethnic groups in Medan: the Javanese, who were many but relatively powerless, the Toba, Chinese, Mandailing, Minangkabau and Malays. The latter five groups each represented about 8-15% of the population. Compared with these ethnic groups, other groups that had migrated from other parts of Sumatra and Indonesia remained significantly smaller. The Karo Batak were the largest but made up only 4-5% of the population.

What these ethnic statistics show is that Medan, after 1950, had become an even more plural city than during colonial times. As regarded the ethnic power structure, no single group could successfully claim the right to dominate the other-

17 Pelly's figure is somewhat lower than that in the official census of Medan in 1980. The reason may be that different strategies were used in obtaining data.
ers. The period of Malayo-Muslim culture as a local dominant culture had gone. After 1950, Medan became, in the words of E. Bruner, a “city of minorities”, a fiercely competitive place, where ethnic tension and conflict often showed, and ethnic identities played an important role in everyday life. As regarded religion, the survey of the HKPB University showed that 64% of the population were Muslims, 22% Christians and 13% Buddhists. The two latter groups were almost exclusively Chinese.

With regard to the general influx of people of various ethnic groups, it is important to note that they did not spread out homogeneously throughout the city. Compared with colonial times, Medan was no longer formally divided between different ethnic groups. Everyone could in principle settle where he or she preferred. Ethnic groups tended, however, to prefer certain areas and to form ethnic kampungs, where a significant proportion of the neighbours belonged to the same ethnic group. These ethnic dynamics are generally a well-known fact in Medan but were substantiated by the statistical surveys referred to earlier.

Pelly has convincingly demonstrated that the main occupations of ethnic groups often played a large role in deciding where they chose to settle. For instance, the Karo Batak, who in 1980 made up only 5% of the total population, clustered in the southern part of the Medan Baru district, west of the airport. In the three kelurahan, Beringin, Titi Rante and Padang Bulan, the population in 1980 consisted of 65% Karo. Following the tradition from colonial times, many Karo were engaged in the supply of foods, mainly vegetables and fruit, to the city. On a seasonal basis they moved between the Karo highlands and Medan. Therefore they settled in the south-eastern parts of Medan, from where the road to the Karo highlands extended.

The Chinese continued to dominate in the eastern parts of the city centre, but with the opening of new markets in the 1950s in other parts of town, members of the Chinese community moved into these areas. They were followed by the Minangkabau, who worked as artisans and small-scale shopkeepers. The districts that were added in 1974 were dominated by Javanese and Malays. One example is that, in the Deli and Labuhan districts, about 70% of the population were Javanese and Malay.

20 The figures were 928,744 Muslims, 266,868 Protestants, 52,262 Catholics and 191,741 Buddhists out of a total population of 1,453,030. Data Penduduk 1989, p. 6.
22 Pelly 1983, p. 133.
24 See the table in Pelly 1983, p. 378.
After 1950, administrative borders were in principle drawn without regard for the borders of ethnic *kampungs*. The policy was to some extent undertaken in an effort to diminish their importance. One can therefore find areas with an even higher concentration of a specific ethnic group, even though this does not appear in the available statistics.

Although ethnic diversity and competition were important aspects of the development of Medan after 1950, there were, however, also several counter-tendencies that bridged the gaps between ethnic groups.

In the military and the evolving civil bureaucracy, a common loyalty to the new State was fostered, even though ethnic factors remained important in the struggle for positions. The constructed national language, Bahasa Indonesia, which was strongly encouraged in education and the media after 1950, was another factor. In Medan, the transition was easier and more decisive than in other parts of Indonesia. After all, Malay, which was, by and large, the forerunner of Bahasa Indonesia, had been the *lingua franca* among the indigenous population during colonial times. The lack of any dominating ethnic group after 1950 also implied that no specific ethnic language could claim precedence over others. Bahasa Indonesia was perceived to be modern and neutral in ethnic terms, while the use of ethnic languages was largely restricted to homes and ethnic *kampungs*.

Religion could also be seen as uniting several ethnic groups. Christians would occasionally make efforts to co-operate over ethnic borders and some examples will be discussed later. Among the Muslim sections of the population, Islam was often considered a unifying factor. To many Muslims, Christians appeared to be more distant than other Muslim ethnic groups. The result was that the Toba migration after 1950 was seen as a spectacular development, because they, as Christians, established themselves in a milieu with a Muslim majority. On the other hand, a united Muslim front only existed in some situations and threatened to break down in the face of internal ethnic conflicts. A case in point is the relations between the Muslim organisation, the Muhammadiyah, that remained dominated by the Minangkabau, and the Washliyah, a majority of whom were Mandailing Batak. These two organisations occasionally co-operated in support of Muslim political parties, demanding more Muslim influence in political life. But, on the other hand, strong ethnic conflicts could occur, for instance, when the organisations came into dispute about the ownership of an old mosque in Medan.

---

26 This is implied in Pelly 1983, p. 102.
A new phase in Toba Batak migration

The migration of civil servants and businessmen

Before 1942, the Toba were relatively few in Medan and, even though they preferred to settle in certain parts of the city, there were few areas where the Toba component of the population was very conspicuous. In referring to the situation before 1942, the Toba generally do not consider that there was at that time a Toba kampung in the city.

The educated migrants who in the late 1940s obtained employment from the East Sumatra State, continued to work for the local and regional administration. They tried to build Toba civil-servant hierarchies, i.e. to monopolise a workplace in ethnic terms, in much the same way as Mandailing migrants had done during the first few decades of the century. The strong Toba educational tradition was reflected in the fact that the Department of Education soon became a Toba domain. According to a Toba man who worked for the Department in the early 1950s, there were at the time only two languages spoken daily at the office in Medan: Dutch and Toba Batak. A similar development can be observed as the state institution for the education of teachers (IKIP) where the Toba quickly obtained a dominant position. This lasted at least into the 1980s. From the early 1960s until the 1980s, Toba teachers also outnumbered all other groups in all the schools in the city. Even though after 1950 efforts were made to break down the ethnic administrative hierarchies, some appear to have remained. During a visit to a government department in 1994, I got the distinct impression that the workplace was divided between various ethnic groups. In one of the offices, Toba Batak was still the language of casual conversation.

During my visits in the 1990s to the area where the early Toba civil servants settled, i.e. in Medan Baru, I observed that it still had a significant Toba element. Families lived in houses originally built by the East Sumatra State, and Toba clan-names could frequently be observed on houses. This impression is substantiated by the statistics of the 1980s, which showed that the Toba were the largest ethnic group in the two Medan Baru kelurahan of Babura and Merdeka. This area

---

28 In 1979, the Rector of the regional State University (USU) publicly labelled the IKIP "The North Tapanuli Institute", because more than 80% of its employees, teachers and pupils were Toba. When the IKIP students angrily responded, 90% of the signatures were from Toba students. Pelly 1983, p. 166.
29 Pelly 1983, p. 156.
30 On the leading levels, one can assume that ethnic balance was striven for, something that was likely to have been more difficult on the lower levels of the administration.
seems to have been the only one where a large group of educated or middle-class Toba lived in the same area. Otherwise, my impression is that since 1950 these groups of Toba have moved to various middle-class neighbourhoods in the city.

The civil servants were after 1950 supplemented by Toba who were engaged in business and manufacturing, often in the textile trade. Some entrepreneurs were present before 1942, but the new political situation after 1950 opened up new opportunities for non-Chinese business interests. The best-known Toba example is T. D. Pardede.

In 1953, T. D. Pardede built his first textile factory on Jalan Bantam in Medan. In 1960, the main compound was initiated north-west of Medan on Jalan Binjai, for practical reasons, by the railway line between Belawan and Medan. In the 1960s, he expanded his business interests to include cold storage, hotels and a hospital. At least until the 1970s, Pardede’s enterprise was a thoroughly Toba company, in the sense that about 80% of the persons in leading functions and the vast majority of the mainly women workers were Toba.

The success of T. D. Pardede and persons like him implied that a new group of self-conscious, self-made entrepreneurs was added to the Toba community in Medan, previously mainly made up of white-collar workers. Pardede’s general influence in the Toba community had the effect that he also played a large role in his Church, the HKBP. In 1960, he was elected to the Executive Committee of the Church and in 1962 he became head of the finances of the HKBP. Several of my informants claimed that he was the main power to be reckoned with in the HKBP from the 1960s until 1979, when a conflict with the then Ephorus led to his resignation.

Building up a Toba Batak kampung: The case of Sidorame

The mass of the Toba migrants after 1950 was not very well educated and had no intention to expand their business activities in the city. These people represented lower social strata in the Toba community.

In general, one significant aspect of the development of the whole region after 1950 was the extensive Toba migration to the east coast. Until 1942, the
political power of the sultans and the government regulations meant that no huge rural migration was possible. During the Japanese period and the national revolution from 1945, the Toba generally preferred to remain in Tapanuli. But, from December 1949, Toba farmers took the chance to gain fertile land and flooded in thousands into the east coast. Most of them became squatters on estate land.\textsuperscript{35} As early as 1950, the HKBP claimed that about 10,000 Toba had migrated from Tapanuli to the east coast. Small groups had even converted to Islam, in order to make it easier for them to obtain land.\textsuperscript{36}

One example of this kind of migration was from Percut near Belawan on the coast, an area that in 1974 was included in the Medan municipality. As early as 1956, about 400 Toba families lived in this area.\textsuperscript{37} They started to build up wet-rice fields, but it was also possible to engage in fishing to make a living. They owned 125 fishing-boats.\textsuperscript{38} The people also made \textit{tuak} (palm wine) which they sold. Every day, vehicles were reported to leave the area carrying \textit{tuak}. With regard to the ethnic composition of the area, in 1959 the HKBP minister responsible for the area thought that the majority of the population were Toba.\textsuperscript{39}

Toba migrants who chose to settle in Medan did as other ethnic groups did and formed their own ethnic \textit{kampungs}. In the 1980s, the majority of the Toba lived in the four central districts and were distributed quite evenly in these areas. The ethnic statistics revealed, however, that there were smaller areas with large percentages of Toba migrants. In the \textit{kelurahan} of Sudirejo 2, in the Teladan area of the Medan Kota district, 7900 people lived in 1982 and 4000 of them or 51\% were Toba. In the neighbouring \textit{kelurahan} Teladan Barat, Teladan Timur and Sudirejo, 40-50\% were Toba.\textsuperscript{40}

Sidorame, the area I have chosen to describe in somewhat more detail, is situated in the district of Medan Timur, just north of the present Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan. In 1980, the \textit{kelurahan} of Sidorame Timur had 11,200 inhabitants, and 5400 or 48\% were Toba. The second largest ethnic group was the Mandailing (27\%), followed by the Minangkabau (17\%). The neighbouring \textit{kelurahan} of Sidorame Barat also has a relatively high concentration of Toba, 6100 out of 20,000 or 30\%.\textsuperscript{41} In the course of my own visits to the area, it soon appeared that, within these two \textit{kelurahan}, there was an area where the Toba predominated,\textsuperscript{35}\textsuperscript{36}\textsuperscript{37}\textsuperscript{38}\textsuperscript{39}\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{41}

---

\textsuperscript{35} Pelzer 1982, p. 48. A description of this migration and a case study of an area to which the Toba moved, will be found in Cunningham 1958.


\textsuperscript{37} Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), p. 213. In \textit{Marbun} n.d.

\textsuperscript{38} Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), p. 214. In \textit{Marbun} n.d.

\textsuperscript{39} Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur 1959, p. 244. In \textit{Marbun} n.d.

\textsuperscript{40} See the statistics in Pelly 1983, p. 393.

\textsuperscript{41} Pelly 1983, p. 396.
even though one would also find families from other ethnic groups there. Sidorame was regarded by the Toba and by other ethnic groups as a Toba kampung, and Toba Batak could often be heard being spoken in the street.

Why did the Toba cluster in this area? Sidorame is situated just north of what in the Dutch era was the kampung Jati or Jati Ulu area, where many Toba lived before 1942. One informant said that a few had even built their own houses in what is now the southernmost part of Sidorame. It seems that some Toba after 1950 returned to live in the area and that new migrants thought that it was natural to settle where Toba were already living.

Before 1942, the area was just outside the boundaries of the municipality and was a tobacco plantation. In the late 1940s, mainly Javanese but also some Karo Batak used the area for wet-rice farming. During the first few years of the 1950s, a large number of Toba settled in the area. They bought land from the Javanese or Malay farmers and built their own houses. In the 1990s, some houses in typical Malay style could still be seen in the area but were all occupied by Toba, Minangkabau or Mandailing families.

In general, the houses that the migrants built first were simple ones made of wood. Some families who increased their incomes and did not leave Sidorame for some of the middle-class neighbourhoods eventually built houses of stone, sometimes surrounded by high fences. Initially, many Toba families partly continued to rely on wet-rice farming. But, because of the steady influx of new migrants, the area slowly became more genuinely urban, with houses surrounded only by small gardens and with no rice-fields. But the process was not completed until the 1990s and farmland was still kept in some parts of the area.

As regarded infrastructure, the main roads surrounding the area were paved in the 1990s, while the small roads within the area were not. Many of them were not suitable for cars but only for becak (bicycle rickshaws). To the inhabitants, the absence of good roads did not appear to represent a problem because families rarely owned cars. Like most people in Medan they used public transportation when commuting. Taxis were occasionally employed on special occasions and becak were used for local transport.

Besides private houses, one could also find several Toba restaurants, serving traditional Toba food, i.e. various pork dishes. Pigs were kept near the restaurant. Small shops had also been set up, where one would buy sweets, cigarettes or a cup of coffee. There were no large markets in this area of Sidorame, and women had to go to a market in a nearby area.

Some Toba who settled in Sidorame were lower civil servants. Teachers in primary or secondary schools were especially important. On the other hand, most
migrants did not have that background and had less education. In the 1990s, many worked as becak drivers, manual labourers or industrial workers. Some women sold fruit and other small items, such as cigarettes and sweets, in various parts of town. A number of Toba women from Sidorame were small vendors of stamps and envelopes outside the main post office. Quite a large number of Toba women from Sidorame were also involved in selling second-hand clothes. After 1966, when the HKBP decided to house some of the faculties of the Universitas Nommensen on what is now Jalan Sutomo, only a few hundred metres away from Sidorame, many students decided to live there with friends or relatives.

My impression was that the rate of unemployment was rather high. There were, for instance, always young men in the street not doing anything in particular. Many of them had graduated from secondary school, and some had studied at the Nommensen University. In Medan, I frequently met with a Toba becak driver who spoke relatively good English. He said that he had studied for a while at the Nommensen University but had had to drop out, owing to lack of resources.

Toba who had climbed further up the social ladder and moved outside the kampung seemed to have an ambivalent attitude to the area. On the one hand, they were proud to show that the Toba in Sidorame lived together and were able, for instance, to keep pigs, in spite of the fact that they lived in a city with a large Muslim majority. On the other hand, they regarded Sidorame as filthy and said that it had a distinct “ethnic smell” (Ind. bau sukhu) to it. They regarded the Toba community in Sidorame as peasants who, by and large, voluntarily continued to live a kampung life, the sort of life that they themselves had abandoned. But the Toba who lived in the area preferred the sense of security and communality that came with living among their own kinsfolk.

In order to increase mutual support, the Toba after 1950 re-started the voluntary associations. This process has already been analysed by Bruner. It is therefore not necessary to repeat his findings here. In relation to the discussions in previous chapters, just a few remarks are needed. After 1950, the steadily increasing size of the community had the effect that it was soon possible to form associations for individual marga. In relation to the traditional marga system, both husband and wife would become members of the association of his and her marga. The latter was very likely a new development, compared with the period before 1942. After 1950 the role of the voluntary ethnic associations was to provide support in the new milieu. Apart from social and emotional support, they could

---

42 For some examples of Toba women involved in the selling of fruit and vegetables, see Adam 1994, pp. 319ff.
43 For a study of Toba involvement in the latter trade, see Pakpahan 1991.
be the means of newly arrived women and men of obtaining employment. The associations also accumulated funds for those particularly in need.\[45\]

During the process of migrating to Medan, the Toba encountered migrants from other ethnic groups, mainly Muslims, who also tried to settle and make a living. It could then be expected that the competition over limited resources, such as land, would generate conflicts between the Toba and other groups.

Several informants claimed that one strategy that they used was to move the boundaries of their own pieces of land gradually into the land of their neighbour. If their non-Toba neighbours were polite, they might get away with it. If the neighbour was a Toba, he or she would immediately complain and the boundaries would probably be returned to its former position. Another line of action was to roast pork or dogs in the open air, so that the smell would spread around as much as possible. The Toba thereby hoped that in the end their Muslim neighbours would be so distressed by the smell of the cooking that they would prefer to move.\[46\]

Naturally, the other groups would develop counter-strategies. The Mandailing, for instance, would do their best to persuade Malay or Javanese landholders that they should not sell land to non-Muslims, such as the Toba or the Chinese, but to their fellow Muslims, such as themselves. Islamic solidarity was, in other words, invoked to protect Mandailing ethnic interests.\[47\]

With regard to the position of the Toba in Medan, an interesting perspective is that which Toba and other ethnic groups had of the Toba migration to the city from 1950 onwards. In the 1980s, Pelly claimed, on the basis of the ethnic statistics that he had compiled, that it would come as a surprise to most people in Medan that the number of Javanese was twice that of the Toba, "whose migration to the city after 1950 is so well-known."\[48\] While the Toba in the 1980s comprised about 15% of the population and the total of all Batak groups was not more than 35%, the general idea among many Toba and non-Toba in Medan was that Medan was developing into a Batak city. Bruner claimed that by 1970 Medan was becoming a Batak town of minorities and that the population of all Batak subgroups was approaching 50%.\[49\] What grounds he had for his statement is not clear, but it is likely that he was relying on the common perception of people, and in particular Toba, in the city. When in the 1990s I randomly asked Toba and non-

---

\[45\] For this pattern among women, see Adam 1994, pp. 67f. In view of the Toba Batak civil-servant hierarchies, involving both women and men, one can assume that the men were also able to obtain opportunities through the voluntary associations.

\[46\] See also Pelly 1983, p. 125.


\[48\] Pelly 1983, p. 102.

\[49\] Bruner 1972, p. 211.
Toba how many Toba and how many Batak lived in Medan, a frequent answer among the non-Toba was that the Batak numbered 30-40%. Many Toba whom I talked with were convinced that the number of Toba was 30-40% and the number of Batak 50-70%. They frequently claimed that Medan was now a Batak city.

These examples show that in the ethnic situation after 1950, the Toba generally developed a sense that the city had become “theirs”, through the establishment of the ethnic kampungs. In this context, the Toba obviously used the help of the other Batak groups in order to demonstrate their own importance and strength. The fact that many small Toba kingdoms had been established implied that the Toba were increasingly seeing Medan as their city, a part of their kingdom regardless of the competition with other ethnic groups.

Facets of congregational life

The growth of Christian congregations

Connected with the general increase of the population and the strong growth of the Toba community was the growth of the Christian congregations in Medan. During the post-war period, the number of Christian congregations in Medan increased dramatically.

In 1989-90, a survey was made by the Protestant section at the municipal branch of the Department of Religious Affairs, regarding the various Protestant Churches and congregations in Medan. To gain a full picture of the Christian community in Medan, I have complemented the survey with data from the Catholic Church.

These statistics showed that the Christians in Medan numbered all in all almost 350,000 individuals, distributed between 354 congregations and 54 different Church bodies. Forty-one of the Churches had five congregations or less. Most of them were small Pentecostal Churches with one or two congregations. The data from the eight largest Churches are shown in Table VI.

50 Departemen Agama Kotamadya Medan bagian Protestan: Data Organisasii Gereja-Anggota Jemaat di Daerah Tingkat II Kotamadya Medan tahun 1989-90. Hasselgren private archive. To conduct the survey, the office sent questionnaires to church offices and congregations in Medan but also had a few people who actively tried to search for congregations in various places in Medan.
### Table VI. The main churches in Medan in 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Huria Kristen Batak Protestant, HKBP</td>
<td>176,000</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Catholic Church</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gereja Kristen Protestant Indonesia, GKPI (^a)</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gereja Karo Batak Protestant, GBP K</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gereja Kristen Protestant Simalungun, GKPS (^b)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gereja Protestant Persekutuan</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Huria Kristen Indonesia, HKI</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Gereja Methodist Indonesia, GMI</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) This Church was founded in 1966 after a split in the HKBP.

\(^b\) GKPS is the Simalungun Batak Church founded in 1963, when the Simalungun district of the HKBP became a separate Church organisation.

The survey showed that, of the 54 Churches, 34 were led by a Batak and 29 by a Toba. All the larger Churches belonged to that category, including the Catholic Church. The fact that the leaders of a Church were Batak did not necessarily mean that all the members belonged to that ethnic group, even though this was most often the case. Among the larger Churches, five (HKBP, GKPI, HKI, GKPS, GBKP) were clearly ethnic churches with almost 100% Batak members. The GKPI and the HKI had officially declared that they were not ethnic churches, but still they had almost only Toba members. The same applied to the Pentecostal Gereja Protestant Persekutuan. In the Methodist Church (GMI), about 80% were Toba, while 20% were Chinese.\(^52\) As for the Catholic Church, the large majority, probably more than 95%, were Toba.

The ethnic composition of the Churches implied that among 350,000 Christians in Medan, 331,000 (94%) were Batak and 291,000 (83%) Toba.\(^53\) In other words, the statistics confirm the general impression that the Batak groups, and primarily the Toba, made up a very large majority of the Christians in the Municipality. The survey also showed that Toba were members and leaders of all kinds of Churches, from the Catholic Church, via the mainline Protestant ethnic Churches, to the Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals and Adventists. Even though most Toba Pentecostal groups were small, they represented together almost 20,000 Christians in 52 congregations, making Pentecostalism an important strand in Toba Christianity. For Toba Christians, the religious alternatives available were

---

\(^52\) Personal communication from Dr. R. Daulay, Medan.

\(^53\) The figure of 350,000 corresponds rather well with the statistics of the Universitas HKBP Nommensen. It was claimed that 22% out of 1.45 million inhabitants were Christians in 1988.
more plentiful than ever. In spite of growing pluralism, the mainline Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church were still the largest ones, and the HKPB remained the single largest Church in the city.

The development of Toba Christian congregations shows that they remained a crucial institution in post-war Medan and an important element in the general development of Indonesian society in the city.

The emergence of the urban kampung Church

In relation to the general development of the city, most Toba congregations were founded in the kampung areas of Medan. When Toba migrants had acquired land and built their houses, the next project was to found a Christian congregation and build a church.

When they arrived in the city, they started to attend the services of the nearest congregation, most often affiliated to the same Church organisation as they had belonged to before they moved to Medan. But loyalty to the old denomination could not be taken for granted in the process of migration. It was certainly rather common for people, for practical reasons or because of conflict, to change their church membership.

In 1950, the HKBP, for instance, reported that some migrants preferred to join Pentecostal and Adventist groups, Huria Kristen Indonesia or the Methodists. There were, however, limits to this flexibility. A Toba would in general not join a congregation that was dominated by another ethnic group. When I asked why, informants often answered that “it would not feel right” (Ind. tidak cocok). It was also common for migrants, for various reasons, not to bother to register with any congregation. They may not originally have planned to stay for long in Medan or they were a couple who had eloped. But even if they did not want to register, they still, in many cases, took part regularly in worship.

It is difficult to know how extensively this development affected a Church such as the HKBP, but, with time, one can assume that Toba migrants had more people from their own Church to relate to. As regarded the members of the smaller Toba Churches, some presumably from the start attended worship in the local HKBP church but were prepared to found a separate congregation when the number of members of their original denomination had become large enough.

---

55 For these patterns, see Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur 1959, p. 236. In Marbun n.d.
In some cases, the Toba initially used a church that belonged to another denomination. The HKBP congregation in Belwan thus used the Salvation Army citadel before they moved in 1956 into a new church that they had built themselves.\(^56\) In the town of Binjai, west of Medan, the HKBP congregation until 1956 used the church of the Chinese Methodists.\(^57\) This solution was obviously seen as only a temporary one, while waiting for the opportunity to build a separate church.

In the 1950s, a Toba minister who worked in Medan testified to the strong desire of the Toba to build their own churches: “In general, something that sets the souls of members on fire is to erect a church. If they want to build a church, the power of the church council makes the soul of the congregation burn like the light of a lamp, so that the congregation is seen by God.”\(^58\)

The building of churches, such as the HKBP church in Sidorame, followed a similar pattern. At first, the church would be very simple with walls of plywood and a roof made out of leaves. Later, simple, movable wooden benches were made and installed on the dirt floor. When the community increased, the church was enlarged and made more permanent. The walls were made of thicker wood and eventually of bricks. A floor of cement was added, permanent benches were installed and a roof of a material such as zinc was provided. If the congregation continued to grow, the church was further enlarged and, as in the case of Sidorame, the church tower became the main landmark in the area. In the 1990s, some had installed an electric organ, microphones and amplifiers. This pattern is often retold in the congregational histories, which shows that it was regarded as important, testifying to the determination to gradually improve the structure.\(^59\)

In congregational reports and histories, the church building often plays a central role. This was certainly an outcome of the fact that many of the activities of ministers and other people active in the congregation revolved around the church. Between Toba congregations, there was also an element of competition. In relation to other Toba, a beautiful church was a way of saying “we adore God in a more dignified way than you do”.

The main function of the church as a symbol was, however, in relation to other ethnic groups. The church showed that Toba migrants had become a permanent factor in the area. They had now established their harajaon, and the sign

---


\(^57\) Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur 1956, p. 201. In Marbun n.d.

\(^58\) Bat. “Umumna, tung na marapi purun do roha ni ruas i anggo pauli gareja na be. Aut songon na pauli gareja i gogo ni kerkaad pauli tondi ni huria, nungu galak songon api na marsonondang nian huria i idao ni Tuhan.” Medan Timur 1957, pp. 224f. In Marbun n.d.

\(^59\) For the various phases in the process of building the HKBP Church in Sidorame, see Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), p. 212. In Marbun n.d.
of that barajaon was the church, visible to all others in the area. To attend worship in the church, with a Toba Batak service, was not only a religious act but an ethnic statement.

With this perspective in mind, it was only natural that the church should be a target of other ethnic groups involved in conflicts with Toba. Among the Toba in Medan, there are numerous stories of stones being thrown or churches being burned down. The HKBP church at Sidorejo, east of Sidorame, was burned down once in 1959 and twice in 1963. In another case, the HKBP church at Pardamean, outside Medan, was burned down seven times in 1957. The Toba had not been given permission to build a church by the management of the plantation in the area, but, after the intervention of the Christian governor, the management had to accept the church. The situation obviously led to severe conflicts. The Toba had most likely, in the first place, settled on the plantation without permission and were regarded as intruders by the management. The Toba also competed with other ethnic groups about how to take control over the available land in the area, a situation that then led some Muslims to decide to burn the church, a symbolic act.

Even though the congregational histories do not explicitly blame Muslims of other ethnic groups for these fires, it can be assumed that the burning of churches was one important feature in the ethnic struggle for resources among the migrants. The attacks on the churches strengthened the building as an ethnic symbol and churches that were re-built and left in peace were considered to represent victories and signs that the Toba kingdom had been truly established.

With the founding of congregations in the developing kampungs, especially the old HKBP congregation obtained the status of an élite congregation, sociologically speaking. People who had been members before 1942, i.e. educated civil servants in most cases, often continued as members of the congregation, even though there were now other alternatives in the city. The church in central Medan was also situated quite near the Medan Baru area, where many educated Toba settled. Because of the increase of members, the congregation in 1955 built a new church, a large, white, stone church, a few blocks from the old one, on the present Jalan Sudirman. It was reputed that T. D. Pardede paid a large portion of the expenses. It remains by far the largest and best-known Toba church in the city.

The status of the old HKBP congregation meant that people in the Toba kampung would not generally worship there. In Sidorame, people would say, when asked why they did not attend worship with the old congregation some 3 kilome-

---

62 For details of the building of the church, see Sejarah Sudirman 1987, pp. 33ff.
tres from where they lived, that it would “not feel right” (Ind. *tidak cocok*). On the other hand, when I told people among the educated élite that I had attended worship in Sidorame, they often asked me what it was like, hinting that they thought it was an interesting thing to do and that they had not been there themselves. I met with no similar reactions from others when I had visited the church on Jalan Sudirman. Presumably it was considered the natural thing to do for a person of high status.

Organising spontaneous church growth

The tremendous growth of Christian congregations after 1950 was, by and large, not a centrally planned process. Migrants founded congregations wherever they settled. It was only when they had started the process that the Church to which they wished to belong was contacted. In organising congregations, the migrants on their own initiative elected a church council, appointed church elders and often employed a teacher part-time for a small salary. Teachers, who usually carried on the main work of the congregation, were often state officials. They could stop working at the office in the early afternoon and go on to work for their Church. By working as teachers, they could gain in prestige in the local community and add some money to their not-very-large, state salary.

The central administrations of the Churches were primarily needed to supply ministers to conduct services, at least once each month, and to celebrate the sacraments. Normally, services were led by the teacher. In the perspective of the central administrations of the Churches and the local ministers, the development of congregations meant that they had a steadily growing number of people who approached them and asked for their services. An urgent need arose to organise, at least somewhat, what bureaucratically seemed like a rather chaotic development.

The response of the Churches to this process can be illustrated by the administrative development of the HKBP in the area. Since 1934, the HKBP congregation in Medan had had the status of a *ressort* (parish). It was led by a *pandita ressort* (the head minister of a parish) in Medan and was part of the East Sumatra District. In 1951, Medan became the centre of the new district of Medan-Aceh which included the same area as the previous parish and Aceh. Medan was also

---

63 For some examples, see Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), p. 206. In Marbun n.d. In one congregation, Kampung Besar outside Medan, it was difficult to recruit a teacher because civil servants were very few. Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), p. 206. In Marbun n.d.

64 *Synode Gadang HKBP* 1951, p. 22.
the seat of a Praeses. Within the HKBP structure the District was intact, at least until 1989, while new ressort have been founded continuously.65

In 1952, the Medan ressort included, apart from the church in central Medan, 18 other congregations. These congregations included, for instance, those in the towns of Belawan, Binjai, Lubuk Pakam, Pancur Batu and Tanjung Pura.66

In 1953, the east coast ressort was divided into two new ressort, Medan and Serdang.67 Two years later, there were five ressort in the district: Tebing Tinggi, Medan and Serdang on the east coast, Kabanjahe in the Karo area and Kutacane in Aceh.68 In 1956, the Medan ressort was divided into two, when the new ressort of Medan Timur (East Medan), administered from the new church in Sidorame, was founded.69 These two ressort were responsible both for the new congregations that were being established in Medan itself and for a number of congregations in the rural areas outside the city.70 The reason was obviously that rural congregations would be helped by being administered from the city.

In 1961, the HKBP in Medan consisted of four ressorts. Medan Barat (West Medan) had been founded for new congregations in the western area of the Municipality.71 Furthermore, a new and unique ressort was also founded by T. D. Pardede. He established two congregations in relation to his growing business interests, the first in 1958 on the premises of his textile factory.72

Conflict patterns and conflict resolutions

In the new congregations, conflicts would regularly emerge over various issues. Tensions about the leadership in the congregation could exist between the minister and the elders or teachers. The leadership of choirs and the relation between leaders of different choirs might also be a source of conflict. To be in a position of power often implied access to additional sources of income. In the Toba sources, accusations of financial misconduct are not unusual. In the event of a conflict, people would try to mobilise clan-mates and friends for support, and the congregation might quickly be divided into two competing fractions.

---

65 Almanak HKBP 1989, pp. 294f.
68 Almanak HKBP 1955.
70 At the time, the old congregation had responsibility for eight other congregations (Simpang Limun, Padangbulan, Sukarame, Martoba, Bangunsari, Sungai Puth and Pancur baru). The Sidorame ressort included Sidorejo, Percut, P Brayon, Kampung Besar and Belawan. Sejarah Sudirman 1987, pp. 37f.
72 Lumbantoruan 1974, pp. 22ff.
In most cases, conflicts on the level of congregational leadership in post-war Medan seem to have been resolved without breaking the unity of the denomination. Sometimes a group accepted that they had lost the struggle and agreed that the person whom they had supported was fired. In other cases, one group left the congregation and founded another congregation in the same area. The guiding principle was that they did not leave their Church, but simply founded a new congregation within it. The developments implied that the conflict, in one sense, was resolved, since the power and positions that were at stake were not relevant any more when one group had started to build up their own structure.

Tensions between old and new migrants could also have an impact on church life. The conflict that broke out in the HKBP when in 1956 Medan was divided into two ressorts, one led by the old congregation and the other by the new congregation in Sidorame, is a case in point.

From the beginning of their existence, there were tensions between the old and the new ressorts. The Toba in Sidorame were proud that their new congregation had been selected to become the centre of a ressort. They also quickly stated their independence and rejected the name that the old congregation in Medan had suggested for them (Deli Hilir). Instead, they chose the name Medan Timur, after the new city district of Medan Timur to which Sidorame belonged.73

In the same year that the ressort in Sidorame had been founded, conflict broke out between the Rev. Marbun, the head minister in Medan Timur, and the leadership of the old HKBP congregation. Marbun had been elected Praeses by his colleagues in the district, which implied that Sidorame also became the centre of the whole district. Marbun was opposed by the Rev. D. Sinaga, the new minister of the old HKBP congregation. The conflict was so severe that the leadership of the HKBP decided to found a new “preliminary” district led by Sinaga and administered directly by the headquarters in Tapanuli.74 It was only in 1961 that the conflict was settled. In that year, both Marbun and Sinaga left Medan for other duties in their Church and the two districts merged.75

Representatives of the old HKBP congregation obviously regarded it as the most prominent in the city and in a position of leadership, even after Sidorame had been made into a separate ressort. They also thought the Praeses of the district should belong to their congregation, an attitude that led to a severe conflict when the minister in Sidorame came to occupy that position. Sinaga obviously did not accept the fact that the new Praeses would have authority over him.

74 Sejarah Sudirman 1987, p. 38.
75 Marbun became head of the Sunday school department of the HKBP and Sinaga became a financial administrator. Sejarah Sudirman 1987, p. 38.
The fact that the conflict was serious enough to force the HKPB leadership to separate the administrative authorities of the two ministers shows that they were supported by a majority of their congregations. Otherwise, the conflict would have been easier to solve. It is not far-fetched to assume that tensions between old and new migrants played a part. The old, re-established élite were annoyed when their rude, kampung-living cousins aspired to take the leadership of the whole district, including the old congregation in Medan. The new migrants in Sidorame were, for their part, proud of their new status and did not want to give it up.

The conflict was complicated because at least two congregations in the Sidorame ressort supported the old congregation and wanted to be administered from there. One was the congregation at Percut. The other was the congregation in Sidorejo, about 1 kilometre from Sidorame. Their teacher consequently did not take part in meetings that were arranged in Sidorame. Members of the Sidorejo congregation had previously attended worship at Sidorame but had just obtained permission from the minister at Sidorame to hold separate services. It was a first step in the process of establishing a congregation of their own, to manjae. These kinds of processes are often the source of conflicts, and Sidorejo obviously did not want to have anything to do with Sidorame when they had “established their own household”. From these examples, it is obvious that some congregations preferred to ally themselves with, and profit from, contacts with the oldest HKBP congregation.

The educational ladder: From primary school to university

Education has remained an important preoccupation of the Toba, and after 1950 congregations in Medan continued the tradition. Almost all of the newly established congregations started their own schools, often situated right by the church. In the 1950s, the development of state schools certainly did not follow the pace at which the migrants moved into the city. In that situation, the Toba had to create educational opportunities themselves. Among these schools, the primary schools (Sekolah Rakyat, SR, later Sekolah Dasar, SD) were certainly the most important, although the lower secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Pertama, SMP) were frequently added later.
The schools were mainly financed and run by the congregations themselves, though occasional help could come from the local administration.379

The development of schools was often started immediately after the congregation had been founded. The HKBP congregation of Sei Agul, for instance, said that they started their primary school "from the beginning".80 In 1956, only two years after the congregation had been founded, the HKBP in Sidorame applied to hold classes on the primary level with 600 children in the state primary school in Sidorame. In that case, a group of teachers educated at the senior normal school (Sekolah Guru Atas, SGA) was prepared to teach. The board of the state school did not give their permission, as the Department of Education had ruled that state schools could not be used in this way.81 The congregation then had to build their own schools. In 1959, the HKBP congregation in Sidorame was already building a primary school with classes 1-4 for 350 children. They had also started a lower secondary school with two classes and 33 children.82 The following year, the two schools added one grade each.83 This development was natural, since the children who had attended the schools now needed further education. Occasionally, the upgrading of schools took a long time. It was, for instance, not until 1982 that the HKBP Sei Agul congregation, which started a primary school at the time when the congregation was established in the late 1950s, launched a lower secondary school.84

Congregations were in general proud of their educational efforts. The HKBP congregation Wahidin Baru, for instance, asserted that their school had educated "... many who have prospered and obtained positions in government or private companies."85 Even though schools were primarily aimed at Toba children, they were also able to attract the children of other ethnic groups, presumably those who lived in the same area. In 1960, the Wahidin Baru congregation primary school, for instance, had Minangkabau, Javanese and Chinese children.86 The school of the Mission Batak, founded in the 1930s, had in 1970 about 50% Muslim pupils.87 This development shows that the Church schools soon obtained such a...
good reputation in the area that other ethnic groups preferred to send their children there, instead of the state schools.

On the other hand, the Toba certainly also sent their children to the state schools. In 1956, 50% of the pupils of the two schools in Sidorame, for instance, were said to have been Christians, i.e. mainly Toba Batak. The efforts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to recruit teachers of religion implied that there were connections between the church and the state schools. In the mid-1950s, a minister complained that the workload was heavy because in secondary schools in his area there were about 3000 Christians.

The educational interest also led some Churches to start to involve themselves in higher education and to found their own universities. In the 1990s, the Catholic Church had established their Universitas St Thomas, while the Methodist Church had started the Methodist University of Indonesia. The first church-connected university was, however, the HKBP Nommensen University, founded in Pematang Siantar in 1957. Its Medan branch was established in 1966. The University building in Medan was built at the junction of the present Jalan Sudirman and Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan, at the time not far from the outer boundaries of the city and close to the Toba-dominated kampung in Sidorame.

The importance of this institution is shown by the fact that conflicts about its control, involving the whole Church, have been frequent. In 1962, T. D. Pardede became chairman of the board of the University. But, in 1965, a conflict between him and the Rector, Andar Lumbantobing, in the end led to Lumbantobing resigning. In 1965, Pardede succeeded Lumbantobing as Rector. Urged on by his supporters, Lumbantobing then decided to found a new Church, Gereja Kristen Protestant Indonesia. Even though these universities have certainly felt the competition from the State University of North Sumatra, until the late 1990s they remained important educational institutions in Medan.

These educational efforts show that the bond between the Church and education persisted. The reason for churches to found schools and even universities has to be sought in the need felt to create the best opportunities for hamajuon. In the perspective of the Churches and congregations, running schools also provided them with the opportunity to morally influence the young generation.

Seen from another angle, the Churches' endeavours in the field of education were also important for the development of society at large. They provided edu-

---

cation, and not only to their own ethnic group, in a situation in which state education did not develop at the same pace as the growth of the population.

**Ecumenical initiatives in post-war Medan**

My treatment of church life in Medan after 1950 has so far focused on the dynamics of the establishment of new congregations. I have treated the developments with reference to the various Churches taken as separate entities and then generalised about the process. It is, however, important not to limit the analysis to the separate Churches and to take up the issue of Church co-operation.

In Jakarta, the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI) was founded in 1950 as a central ecumenical organisation for Indonesia. In the same year a local branch of the Council, the “Sumatra Council of Churches”, was founded in Medan. It was initiated by the pastors G. Siahaan of the HKBP, J. Brahmana from the Karo Batak Church, and P. Souhoka from Gereja Protestan Indonesia Barat, the successor of the Protestantsche Kerk. T. S. Sihombing, who had been one of the persons most active in ecumenical co-operation in Medan in the late 1940s, is not said to have been involved in this process. In 1951, he left Medan to become rector of the HKBP seminary in Sipoholon. It therefore appears that there were no clear organisational relations between ecumenical work after 1950 and the conference of ministers in 1949.

When G. Siahaan and J. Brahmana left in 1953-54 to occupy important leadership positions in their Churches, ecumenical work declined. But the two continued to be involved in the working committee of the DGI branch of North Sumatra (Badan Pekerja Dewan Gereja2 Indonesia Daerah Sumatera Utara). It was led by P. Souhoka in Medan, who had been appointed the official contact person of the DGI in North Sumatra and in whose home meetings took place. The issues discussed by the Committee were how to develop relations with the DGI in Jakarta and how to co-ordinate theological education.

---

93 Ginting Suka, Pandangan Umum sekitar DGW Sumatera Bagian Utara, n.d. (c1973). DGIW archives. The source is a short sketch of the history of post-1950 ecumenical work in Sumatra. A. Ginting Suka was the first chairman of the newly constructed Sumatra branch of the DGI in 1965 and served as its chairman until 1973.
Ecumenical work on this level does not appear to have developed beyond the embryonic state. It was to a large extent dependent on the initiative of a few clergy. These observations confirm the statement of Müller-Krüger, who in the mid-1960s claimed that the Council of Churches on Sumatra, since it was founded in 1950, had shown little ability to develop. According to him, the reason why the Churches until then had not shown more interest in the Council was that “no real essential issues” were at stake.99 In general, one can assume that the efforts to rebuild the Churches, physically, morally and spiritually, after the years of war and destruction was the main focus of Church leaders. In Medan, the establishment of new congregations was seen as the primary task.

At the time, the main emphasis of the DGI was also on fostering relations between the headquarters in Jakarta and the individual Churches on North Sumatra, not to develop ecumenical co-operation regionally.100 It was only in 1964 that the DGI took new initiatives to regionalize its work. To this end, regional ecumenical offices (Dewan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia Wilayah, DGIW) were initiated. The regional branch in North Sumatra was established in Medan in 1965.101 The development of the office belongs to the next phase in Indonesian history and is not my concern here.

On the other hand, local ecumenical initiatives were taken in Medan that do not appear to have been connected with the DGI. Several Protestant ministers, including the head minister of the HKBP, in 1956 started to meet regularly in order to co-ordinate some of their social and educational activities. These included regular visits to the prisons, the municipal hospital, and the nurses’ and midwives’ school. All the Protestant ministers involved also taught religion in the state schools. These activities were conducted “in the name of all Protestant clergy in Medan.”102 The initiative was obviously a way of co-ordinating efforts related to the role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in supplying ministers for activities in state institutions. But it was, in the face of the rapid growth of congregations, also a means of reducing the heavy workload of the ministers.

100 This tendency is clearly seen in a report from the General Secretary of the DGI, W. J. Rumambi, who in 1955 visited the region. The main part of the report is devoted to various aspects of the life of individual Churches, and he does not even make a general analysis of the general ecumenical situation in the region. See Laporan Sekretaris umum 1955.
102 Bat. “... atas goar ni sude Pandita Protestan na di Medan ...”. Those who took part in these meetings were ministers of the HKBP, including the Simalungun Batak district, the Karo Batak Church (GBK), the Methodist mission, the GPIB, and the Gereformeerde Church. Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur (1956), pp. 217f. In: Marbun n.d. Marbun, Bericht Medan Timur 1957, p. 229. In Marbun n.d.
Another local initiative was the celebration of Reformation Day (31 October), in which in 1955 about 300 members of several Protestant denominations, including the HKBP, took part. On this occasion, all the sermons were held in Indonesian. The example shows that the Protestant identity prevailed in these Churches and that, at least for a limited number of people, Protestantism could be made into a cherished common ground.

The most important ecumenical activity in Medan after 1950 was, however, the large services, with thousands of Christians attending, at the big Teladan Stadium. Until the 1990s, these meetings took place on various occasions during the year, mainly during Christian holidays, such as Easter and Christmas. On the psychological level, it is not far-fetched to assume that the main attraction of the meetings was the chance to show that the Christians in Medan represented a large group of people. This was indeed "an essential issue" in post-war Medan. The sense of being many could be demonstrated both internally and symbolically to the rest of the population, in which the Christians, and mainly the Toba Christians, were a rapidly growing minority. The temporary sense of being a majority could also compensate them emotionally for the injustices which they felt they had suffered in the struggle to establish themselves in the city.

When the Christians met at the Stadium in the late 1950s, each minister addressed them in their mother tongue, Toba-Batak, Indonesian or Javanese. The fact that local languages were used at all shows that Indonesian was not felt to be widespread enough to be used generally on these occasions. Especially when it came to prayer and liturgy, most Toba at the time would certainly have felt uncomfortable using any other language than their mother tongue.

In this respect there is an interesting contrast between the meetings at the Teladan Stadium and the celebration of Reformation Day, in which in the mid-1950s all sermons were held in Indonesian. The latter celebration was certainly smaller and the use of Indonesian may imply that it was aimed at a smaller group of educated people, for whom the common Protestant identity was important and Indonesian a natural language to use. The mass gatherings of the Teladan Stadium, on the other hand, engaged many of the new migrants. On this occasion, it was the mass effect that was essential. It was therefore more important that everyone could identify with their mother tongue than that everyone understood everything that was said.

---

In spite of the fact that at the Teladan meetings there was scope for people from various ethnic groups to use their own language, ecumenical co-operation did not exist without certain inter-ethnic tensions. On one occasion, the Rev. Marbun of the HKBP reported that:

... the non-Batak Churches suggested that the common service should take place in the morning ... The HKBP, however, did not accept this suggestion from the other Churches. If one were to have services together, it was better to have them in the evening than in the morning.106

The quotation indicates that there were tensions between Batak and non-Batak Christians, but it is difficult to understand why the conflict arose. Since the other Batak Churches are not mentioned, it is likely that Marbun included them as supportive of the HKBP opinion or that their opinion did not really matter, since the HKBP was by far the largest Batak Church in Medan.

These tensions between Batak and non-Batak Christians highlight a particular problem in ecumenical relations after 1950. This was that the Toba and, in particular, the HKBP usually made up the majority in North Sumatra in the organisations formed on the basis of Batak or Christian unity. The smaller Christian or Batak groups also felt that the Toba wanted to dominate such organisations and use them as means of furthering their own interests.107 In relation to the ecumenical co-operation in North Sumatra, Müller-Krüger also stated that the size of the HKBP made the smaller Churches fear that, if they co-operated closely, they would be dependent on the HKBP. This would imply that “their own power could only be used insufficiently in really fruitful co-operative work.”108 It is, therefore, likely that this kind of sentiment lay behind the tensions that the Rev. Marbun referred to.

One should in this context note the limits of ecumenical co-operation. The Churches that were represented in the ecumenical activities after 1950 all had Lutheran or Reformed backgrounds. To co-operate with the Catholic Church was most likely not perceived as an option at all. In general, relations between Protestants and Catholics remained adversative in the 1950s. Furthermore, groups such as the Pentecostals or the Adventists continued to be seen as spiritual enthusiasts or heretics. The Churches that during the colonial period had broken with the RMG, i.e. Huria Kristen Indonesia and Mission Batak, were also outside this ecu-

106 Bat. “... diancurhon na so Huria Batak asa bahenon kabaktian bersama di manogot (ni pesta paduahon rupani.) Anggo on tung so dioloi HKBP do manang beha pe disaranhon huria na asing i. la binahen kebaktian bersama, ingkon kebaktian sore do, ndang kebaktian pagi.” Marbun, Jaarbericht ni HKBP Ressort Medan/Timur 1957, p. 230. In Marbun n.d.
107 Several informants from the smaller Batak Churches have confirmed the point.
menical co-operation. This was owing to the fact that the HKBP continued in the tradition of the RMG and did not accept these Churches as valid because they had separated from the “mother church”. Until the 1960s, the HKBP was also able to prevent these Churches from becoming members of the Indonesian Council of Churches.109

Concluding remarks

After 1950, Toba ethno-religious identity evolved in a new setting. The massive migration of people who did not become white-collar workers and the development of the Toba kampung implied that the Toba community in Medan was to some extent more intimately connected with Tapanuli. This meant that migrants tried their best to rebuild their life from Tapanuli in the city, gathering together and building a church.

The Toba migration was one crucial factor that changed Medan into a “city of minorities”. In the new political and social situation after 1950, the Toba were now in an obvious way actors in changing the ethnic milieu of Medan. The fact that Medan was such a plural environment meant that the Toba could formally live without any restraints from other ethnic groups but that these “unsettled” conditions also led to more conflicts in which ethnic groups competed on equal terms for land and influence.

With regard to congregational life, the period after 1950 showed an extraordinary increase in the Toba congregations and that denominational pluralism had increased considerably. The Toba were now members of a large variety of Churches, both ethnic and non-ethnic. The tradition of the People’s Church was still upheld by the HKBP, but dwindled in the face of pluralism and, for instance, the formation of a separate Church for Simalungun Christians. Despite the fact of denominational pluralism, the main pattern on the congregational level in all church organisations was the ethnic congregation, in which ethnic and religious solidarity was sought and education was promoted but in which conflict could also break out. In the kampung Church, ethno-religious identity was kept in a new social situation.

The particularisation of congregational life was, on the other hand, counteracted by some ecumenical initiatives. The attractiveness of the Teladan meetings showed that ecumenical co-operation could have a wide appeal in relation to the general religious and ethnic situation in the city.

109 The HKI became a member of the DGI only in 1967. Setia Sampai Akhir 1989, p. 186.
Summary

In this study, I have explored the history of the Toba Batak in Medan, within the framework of the ethnic, religious, social and political currents in the city. I have used the concept of ethno-religious identity and discussed it in terms of the interaction with their rural area of origin in North Tapanuli, the other ethnic and religious groups in Medan and the Toba Batak organisational efforts in the city.

I have argued that the historical development of the Toba Batak ethno-religious identity, as developed in North Tapanuli, had its roots in the interaction of the Toba Batak with the activities and theological convictions of the Rhenish mission (RMG). With regard to theology, I have stressed the role of the evolving idea of *Volkschristianisierung*.

During the period under study, Medan changed, from a colonial city in which the indigenous population had to reckon with Malay Muslim dominance to a “city of minorities” after 1950, in which Muslim and Christian ethnic groups competed for influence. In this process, the Toba Batak community and its organisations have been an important factor. They have enabled the Toba Batak to change from a small group that decided to hide their identity into a group that after 1950 confidently took possession of Medan. Through their institutions, they have also contributed to the development of society at large.

For the Toba Batak in Medan, the relations with rural North Tapanuli have remained important. The connection with family, clan and Church in the area of origin was a significant, albeit changing, aspect of Toba Batak history in the city. This conclusion is evident from the impact of the RMG idea of the People’s Church, in the city an important, although contested tradition, and the desire to return to Tapanuli in the difficult times of the Japanese occupation and the struggle for national independence. Another example is the efforts to recreate the ethnic and religious life of Tapanuli in the Toba Batak *kampungs* in Medan after 1950. The Toba Batak community developed from an isolated outpost only reachable by a few educated individuals into a magnet that attracted thousands in the rural areas of Tapanuli. All have, however, striven to fulfil their central cultural ideals, among which the ideal of *barajaon* (kingdom) has been central.

From the time when the first congregation affiliated to the RMG was founded to the development of the *kampung* Church after 1950, the Toba Batak were able
and willing to keep their ethnic identity and religion integrated. An interesting development started in the 1920s, in which also the Toba who had formally broken with the RMG ideal of the People’s Church and become members of in principle non-ethnic denominations, attempted to establish their own ethnic congregations as soon as possible. In fact, the ethnic congregation was, in organisational terms, the backbone of Toba Batak Christianity in Medan.

The development of Toba Batak political organisations shows that, in the ethnic situation of Medan, the main tradition, from the small political groups in the 1930s to the success of PARKINDO after 1945, was to build organisations in which ethno-religious interests could be promoted. Simultaneously, these organisations provided an answer to the challenge of how they, as Christians, would be responsible actors in the political life of the nation.

With regard to the Toba Batak voluntary organisations, the connection with formal Church structures was paramount during the first phase of Toba Batak migration. Even though the formal connections with church organisations after that time decreased in importance, the diversity of organisations was an effect of the increase of the community and the increasingly established position of their group in the city.

For different purposes, the Toba Batak have also chosen to seek partners outside their own group, in order to gain in strength. In this process, they decided to stress one aspect of their ethno-religious identity. In the Batak revival in the 1920s, and in some other cases, they tried to gain strength by allying themselves with the Muslim Batak groups, stressing a common Batak identity and playing down the fact that they were Christians. The Toba Batak have also in different situations stressed the Christian element in their identity. One example is the various ecumenical efforts in which they have taken part. Occasionally, co-operation has been limited to their own ethnic group, but a major trend has been to stress a common identity with Christians from other ethnic groups. The ethnic and denominational situation in Medan meant that the city was a fruitful context in which to develop ecumenical co-operation.

The various political endeavours of the Toba Batak also represented a means of seeking common interests with other politically active Christians in Indonesia. During the Japanese occupation, their Christian identity was challenged by the Japanese policy toward religion. Even though the Toba Batak minister in Medan at the time worked for the good of his Church, his main endeavour was to defend the Christians in the region against Japanese policies and accusations.
Sources and literature

Archives

Germany

Barmen-Wuppertal
VEM ARCHIVES (VEM)

Archive of the Batak Mission (BM)
1.978 Theis A. Personal file 1902-1931
1.992 Muller Eduard. Personal file 1906-1922, 1927-1942
2.105 Hamacher Alwine. Personal file.
2.852 Medan. Station file 1928-1936
2.867 Pematang Siantar. Station file 1905-1939
2.890 Konferenzprotokolle der Missionare 1860-1939
2.908 Warneck J Korrespondenz mit der Heimatleitung 1920-1926
2.909 Warneck J Korrespondenz mit der Heimatleitung 1926-1928
2.910 Warneck J Korrespondenz mit der Heimatleitung 1929-1931
2.946 Pandita-Briefe und Berichte 1909-1913, 1928-1934
2.956 Bericht Hendrik Kraemer 1930

Indonesia

Jakarta
ARCHIVE OF THE SARUMPAET-HUTABARAT FAMILY, Rawamangun

Medan
B. P. H. GULTOM PRIVATE ARCHIVE, Jalan Ngalenko

DGIW ARCHIVE.
The archive of the North Sumatra branch of the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGIW). The archive was not organised when I did my research.
Pearaja Tarutung
ARCHIVE OF HURIA KRISTEN BATAK PROTESTANT (HKBP)
The archive was organised by Dr. J. R. Hutauruk in the 1980s. But when I visited the archive in May 1994 the major part of the archive was not in order.

The Netherlands

The Hague
ALGEMEENE RIJKSARCHIEF (ARA)
Archieven Ministerie van Kolonien
Mementoes van Overgave 1849-1962 (available on microfilm)
Politieke Verslagen Oostkust van Sumatra

's-Hertogenbosch
ARCHIVUM CAPUCCINORUM HOLLANDIAE (ACH)

Leusden
ARCHIEF VAN DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN (AKG)
Archief van de Deputaten voor de Verstrooide Gereformeerde in Nederlands-Oost Indie. (DVG)
Medan
Archief van de Generale Deputaten voor de Zending onder de Heidenen en Mohammedanen 1892-1946. (GDZ)
Medan

Oegstgeest
ARCHIVES OF THE RAAD VOOR DE ZENDING (ARZ)
Archives of the Comité Depok (CD)

Utrecht
RIJKSARCHIEF UTRECHT (RU)
Archief van Generale Deputaten voor de Zending onder heidenen en Mohammeden 1892-1946. (GD)
R 73 S 53 Stukken betreffende het beroepen van een eigen predikant 1915-1918.
R 73 S 54 Stukken betreffende het zendingswek van de gezamlijke kerken van. Medan en Pematang Siantar 1929-1939.
Sweden

**Uppsala**
ARCHIVES OF THE CHURCH OF SWEDEN MISSION (CSM)
Bishop J. Sandegren collection

**J. HASSELGREN PRIVATE ARCHIVE**
In my private archive I have copies of all document that are used in this study from the following archives:
B. P. H. GULTOM PRIVATE ARCHIVE
ARCHIVE OF THE SARUMPAET-HUTABARAT FAMILY
ARCHIVE OF HURIA KRISTEN BATAK PROTESTANT (HKBP)
DGIW ARCHIVE

**Journals and newspapers**

Allgemeine Missions Zeitschrift
Bendera Kita (National library, Jakarta)
Des Meisters Ruf
Gemeenteblaad Medan (National library, Jakarta)
Immanuel
In Die Welt für Die Welt
Jahresbericht der Rheinishe Mission
Kita Sumatora Shimbun (National library, Jakarta)
Soara Batak (National library, Jakarta)

**Oral sources**

**Interviews with:**
Unpublished books and articles


Aritonang, Jan 1987. Perjumpaan Orang Batak Dengan R.M.G. Di Bidang Pendidikan (1861-1940). Ph. D. South East Asia Graduate School of Theology.


Laporan Sekretaris Umum 1955. Laporan Ringkas perkunjungan Sekretaris umum DGI ke Sumatera Utara. A report from the visit of the secretary general of the Indonesian Council of Churches to North Sumatra, 28 October-21 November 1955. It includes both a general schedule (Acara Perkunjungan) and a more detailed description of his visit (Warta Perkunjungan). They have separate pagination.


Published books and articles

Almanak HKBP 1955. Pearaja: Kolportase HKBP.
Almanak HKBP 1989. Pearaja: Kantor Pusat HKBP.


Voorhout: Foreholte/ Brugge: Desclée de Brouwer.


Cunningham C.E. 1959. The Post-war migration of the Toba Bataks to East Sumatra. New Haven, Yale University.


Frick, Heinrich 1924. Vom Pietismus zum "Volkskirchtm". Gütersloh: Bertelsman.


Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.


Langenberg, Michael van 1972. The establishment of the Republic of Indonesia in North Sumatra: Regional Differences and Political Factionalism. Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs 6, no. 1.


Müller-Krüger, Theodor 1968. Der Protestantismus in Indonesien. Geschichte und Gestalt
Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk.


Index of names

Alm, Ragnar, 282-283, 326, 331, 344, 346-349
Adam, Karin, 20, 22, 24, 143, 280
Amrullah, Abdul Karim, 301
Anderson, John, 48
Anderson, Benedict, 132
Anderson, Rufus, 84-85
Aritonang, Jan S., 49, 90, 99, 102, 110-112, 114, 116, 127, 151, 153
Asselt, G. van, 88
Åström, Egon, 282-283
Barth, Fredrik, 27
Barth, J., 94
Benda, Harry, 271, 290, 295, 300, 302-303
Bangun, J., 323-324
Beureu’eh, Daud, 355
Betz, W. F., 88
Beyerhaus, Peter, 98, 100-101, 127
Bos D., 337-338, 340
Brahmana J., 381
Brand, J. van den, 43, 64
Bruner, Edward, 15, 18-19, 362, 368-369
Castles, Lance, 19-20, 22, 72-73, 78-79, 90, 119, 121-122, 124, 129, 132, 225, 264
Cokrosusilo, 285
Crowther, Samuel Adjaì, 84
End, Theo van den, 18, 271
Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, 27-28
Fabri, Friedrich, 81-83, 86-88, 99-101
Gidden, Anthony, 28
Gintings, Djamin, 355
Graul, Karl, 81, 85
Gunning J. W. 118
Hamzah, Amir (Lumbantobing), 124
Hassan, Mohammad, 312-313
Hamacher, Alwine, 234-235, 247-248
Hatta, Muhammad, 265, 277, 295, 311, 320, 354-355
Hamka, 276-277, 290-293, 298, 301, 307
Harrenstein, W. G., 166-167, 174
Heine, C. W. S., 89
Hemmers, J., 50, 188, 212, 264
Henneman, J., 115
Hong, Teen, 65
Hutabarat, Kenan, 211, 225
Hutasoit, Ignatius, 216, 219
Hutauruk, Jubil Raplan, 7, 22, 24, 128, 210, 221-222
Johannsen, P. H., 92, 115, 168
Jong, W. C. De, 344, 346-347
Jusuf, M. 327
Klaassen, N., 143, 159-161, 162, 163, 169
Klammer, J.C., 89
Klaus, W., 326, 344
Kleine, H. de, 252, 330-331, 333, 335-339, 341, 350
Kok, J. G., 139, 143
Kraemer, Hendrik, 125, 238-239
Landgrebe, P., 206, 244
Langen G. J., 63, 165
Langenberg, Michael van, 312, 318, 320
Leach, Edmund, 27
Lotz, A., 186, 189, 198
Lumbantobing, Andar, 88, 380
Lumbantobing, Andreas, 210, 225
Lumbantobing, Ferdinand, 277, 316, 324
Lumbantobing, Florencius, 318
Lumbantobing, Henoch, 127
Lumbantobing, Lamsana, 175
Lumbantobing, Paulus, 180
Lumbantobing, Pontas, 90
Lumbantobing, Rufinus, 295
Lumbantobing, Saul, 277
Lumbantobing Willy, 145, 215-216, 220, 257-259, 281
Makagawa 289-290
Manullang, Mangihut Hezekiel, 108, 122-124, 173
Mansur, Tenku 276
Marbun, H., 24, 377, 384.
Müller, Eduard, 63, 156, 159-170, 173-174, 177, 179, 193, 219-220, 225, 232, 238-239, 242-247, 249-251, 253, 255, 259
Müller, Elisabeth, 242
Müller-Krüger, Theodor, 18, 271, 382, 384
Munson, S., 66, 255
Nakashima, 290
Nainggolan, F. J., 318
Needham, Hester, 81
Nommensen, Ludvig, 22, 89, 92, 95, 98-103, 106, 114, 119-120, 139, 171, 173, 226, 251, 342
Nuis, G., 163, 169
Pakianathan, Solomon, 65
Panggabean, A., 339
Pardede, T. D., 365, 374, 376, 380
Pardede, Urbanus, 165
Patimus, Guru, 53
Pelly, Usman, 19-20, 22, 46-48, 55, 58, 138-139, 148, 358, 360-363, 369
Perret, Daniel, 20-22, 128, 208
Probowinoto, Basuki, 323, 345
Purba, O. H. S., 148
Raffles, Stamford, 37, 91
Reid, Anthony, 43, 45, 52, 60
Rumambi, W. J., 344-345, 382
Rutgers, A. A. L., 64
Sangregn, J., 339-3340, 342
Saragih, Jasamen, 305
Saragih, Wismar J., 257, 289
Sarumpaet, Saladin, 282, 319-321, 323, 344, 349, 356
Sarumpaet boru Hutabarat, Julia, 319-321, 323, 356
Schrøn, Albert, 130
Schreiber, August, 86-87, 95, 103, 113, 121
Schreiner, Lothar, 86, 99-100, 102
Siahaan, G., 381
Sibero, T., 329, 344
Siburian, R., 329
Sibombong, Frederich, 320-321, 323
Sibombong, Justin, 150, 197, 217-218, 222, 234, 245-249, 252-253, 256, 260, 276, 302-303, 330, 334, 339, 340-341
APPENDIX 1

Toba Batak cultural terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adat</td>
<td>tradition, customary law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bius</td>
<td>sacrificial community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boru</td>
<td>daughter, wife receiving group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dalihan na tolu</td>
<td>“three stones”, the system of <em>dongan sabutuhu, bula-bula</em> and <em>boru</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datu</td>
<td>traditional healer, shaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dongan sabutuhu</td>
<td>“friends from the same womb”, members of the same <em>marga</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guru</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gondang</td>
<td>traditional music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hamajuon</td>
<td>progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hamoraon</td>
<td>wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harajaon</td>
<td>kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hasangapon</td>
<td>prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hula-hula</td>
<td>wife-giving group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manjae</td>
<td>to establish one’s own household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marga</td>
<td>clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raja</td>
<td>chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahala</td>
<td>power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sintua</td>
<td>elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tondi</td>
<td>soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umpama</td>
<td>saying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

The status of the RMG/HKBP congregation and employees in Medan, from 1912 to 1950

1912-28  The congregation under the auspices of the RMG missionary in Pematang Siantar
1912-22  Rev. J. Hutabarat (ordained in 1914)
1912-25  Rev. W. Sinaga
1925-28  Missionary Rev. E. Müller (stationed in Pematang Siantar)
1922-25  Missionary Rev. K. Lotz (stationed in Pematang Siantar)
1925-28  Missionary Rev. A. Schneider (stationed in Pematang Siantar)

1928-34  A mission station
1928-32  Rev. J. Sihombing
1932-34  Missionary Rev. A. Theis
1934-32  Missionary Rev. E. Müller

1934-50  An autonomous parsonage lead by a Toba minister
1934-42  Rev. J. Sihombing
1942-50  Rev. T. S. Sihombing (in Medan until 1951)
1935-38  Missionary Sr. A. Hamacher
APPENDIX 3

The leaders of the RMG Batak mission and the HKBP from 1861 to 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861-73</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Dr. A. Schreiber (Praeses)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-1918</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Dr. L. I. Nommensen. (Praeses, from 1881 Ephorus)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-32</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Dr. J. Warneck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-36</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Rev. P. Landgrebe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-40</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Dr. E. Verwiebe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Rev. H. de Kleine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-42</td>
<td>Reve</td>
<td>K. Sirait</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-62</td>
<td>Rev.</td>
<td>Dr. J. Sihombing (former minister in Medan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-65</td>
<td>Rev.</td>
<td>Dr. T. S. Sihombing (former minister in Medan, Ephorus until 1974)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDIA MISSIONALIA UPSALIENSIA

Editors: I-XXVII Bengt Sundkler, XXVIII-LXIX Carl F. Hallencreutz, LXX- Alf Tergel

I  Peter Beyerhaus. Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirche als missionsritisches Problem. 1956
II  Bengt Sundkler. The Christian Ministry in Africa. 1960
V  Eric J. Sharpe. Not to Destroy but to Fulfil: The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought before 1914. 1965
VI  Carl-Johan Hellberg. Mission on a Colonial Frontier West of Lake Victoria. 1965
IX  Gustav Bernander. Lutheran Wartime Assistance to Tanzanian Churches 1940-1945. 1968
X  Sigfrid Esborn. Johannes Sandegren och hans intressen i Indiens kristenhet. 1968
XII  Sigvard von Sicard. The Lutheran Church on the Coast of Tanzania 1887-1914 with special reference to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Tanzania Synod of Uzaramo-Uluguru. 1970
XIV  Sigbert Axelson. Culture Confrontation in the Lower Congo from the Old Congo Kingdom to the Congo Independent State with special reference to the Swedish Missionaries in 1880's. 1970


Stig Jakobsson. Am I not a Man and Brother? 1972


Carl F. Hallencreutz, Johannes Aagaard and Nils E. Bloch-Hoell (eds.). Missions from the North, Nordic Missionary Council 50 Years. 1974

Josiah Kibira. Church, Clan and the World. 1974

Axel-Ivar Berglund. Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism. 1975


Sven Arne Flode/1. Tierra Nueva. Svensk grupputvandring till Latinamerika. Integration och församlingsbildning. 1974


Bengt Sundkler. Zulu Zion and some Swasi Zionists. 1976


Gustav Arén. Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia. 1978

Timothy Yates. Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad. 1978
XXXVI  Emmet E. Ekland. Peter Fjellstedt - missionary mentor of Augustana. 1984
XXXVII  Johan Lundmark. Det splittade gudsfolket och missionsuppdraget. En studie i relationen mellan kyrkan och judendomen. 1983
XXXIX  Carl F. Hallencreutz et al. (ed.). Daring in order to know. Studies in Bengt Sundklers Contribution as Africanist and Missionary Scholar. 1984
XL  Hugo Söderström. God Gave Growth. The History of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. 1985
XLI  Per Erik Gustafsson. Tiden och Tecknen. Israelmission och Palestinabild i det tidiga Missionsförbundet. 1984
XLIII  Agnes Chepkwony. The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Development. 1987
XLIV  Johnny Bakke. Christian Ministry. Patterns and Functions within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. 1987
XLV  Asa Dahlman. L'Eglise à l'épreuve de la tradition. La Communauté Evangélique du Zaïre et le Kindoki. 1986
XLVI  Aasulf Lande. Meiji Protestantism in History and Historiography. 1988
XLVIII  John S. Phobee. Church and State in Ghana. 1989
L  Carl F. Hallencreutz (ed.). Pehr Högströms Förrättningar och övriga bidrag till samisk kyrkohistoria. 1990
LII  Lissi Rasmussen. Religion and property in Northern Nigeria. 1990
LIV Alf Helgesson. Church, State and People in Moçambique. A Historical Study with special Emphasis on Methodist Developments in the Inhambane Region. 1994
LV José Marín González. Peuples indigènes, missions religieuses et colonialisme interne dans l'Amazonie Peruvienne. 1992
LVII Kajsa Ahlstrand. Fundamental Openness. An enquiry into Raimundo Panikkar's theological vision and its presuppositions. 1993
LVIII Eskil Forslund. The Word of God in Ethiopian Tongues. Rhetorical features in the Preaching of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. 1993
LXIV Göran Gunner. När tiden tar slut. Motivförskjutningar i frikyrklig apokalyptisk tolkning av det judiska folket och staten Israel. 1996
LXVII Canaan Sodindo Banana. The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe. From the Programme to Combat Racism to Combat Theology. 1996
LXIX Arne Tolo. Sidama, and Ethiopian. A study on the Emergence of Mekane Yesus Congregations among the Sidama, South Ethiopia. 1998
LXX Katrin AmeiL. Contemplation et dialogue. Quelques examples de dialogue entre spiritualités après le concile Vatican II. 1998
LXXII Ngwabi Bhebe. ZAPU and ZANU guerilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. 1998
LXXIV Bengt Sundkler & Christopher Steed. A History of the Church in Africa. 1999
LXXVII Oscar Stenström. Proverbes des Bakongo. 1999