

A MODERN BATAK *HORJA*:  
INNOVATION IN SIPIROK ADAT CEREMONIAL\*

Susan Rodgers Siregar

The Batak peoples of North Sumatra have an almost alchemic knack for reshaping their traditional cultural patterns to adjust to social conditions in today's urban-centered, multi-ethnic Indonesia. Institutions and ideologies built up over centuries in the homeland farming villages of Tapanuli have in many cases made the transition to town and rantau life with striking success. The anthropologist Edward Bruner has, for instance, described the traditional Batak kinship system's ability to help many Tapanuli villagers adapt to life in large Sumatran cities.<sup>1</sup> Bruner found that these new "city Batak" do not abandon their village patterns of asymmetrical cross cousin marriage and firm clan loyalties. Rather, they use these forms of traditional social alliance as very modern mechanisms for easing the transition to urban life. Yet, not surprisingly, Batak kinship has changed considerably in the process, to the point that this basic idiom of local village sociality has been stretched to accommodate such outlandish new kinsmen as Javanese in-laws and Balinese daughters-in-law.<sup>2</sup>

Village adat is another Batak domain that has survived in modern "national" society in sturdy hybrid form. Far from being static and hidebound (as the usual translation of adat as "customary law" might imply), Batak adat has actually proven to be extremely adaptive and creative over the past forty years. Yet, like kinship, it has served recent generations of villagers and townsmen as a sort of cultural gyroscope allowing them to keep their balance in their society's truly headlong rush into modernity. (If the Batak today are rightly stereotyped as an education-minded, rantau-directed population set on launching at least one son or daughter per family into white-collar work beyond the village, in the middle of the nineteenth century Batak society was village-bound, xenophobic, subsistence-oriented, and largely illiterate.<sup>3</sup> That so many Batak have emerged from this period

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\*This article is based on anthropological research on adat and oral literature conducted by the author in Sipirok, South Tapanuli, from 1974 to 1977.

<sup>1</sup>Edward M. Bruner, "Urbanization and Ethnic Identity in North Sumatra," *American Anthropologist*, 63, 3 (June 1961), pp. 508-21.

<sup>2</sup>Bruner, "Kin and Non-Kin," in *Urban Anthropology*, ed. Aidan Southall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 373-92.

<sup>3</sup>For a valuable bibliography of Batak sources in Western languages, the Batak dialects, and Indonesian, see Toenggoel P. Siagian, "Bibliography on the Batak Peoples," *Indonesia*, 2 (October 1966), pp. 161-84. See especially entries on adat, pp. 169-73. The basic ethnography of a Batak adat system as it relates to kinship is perhaps J. C. Vergouwen, *Het Rechtsleven der Toba Batak* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1933).

of rapid modernization as cocky and feisty as they are is no small feat in itself, and seems clearly related to the resilience of their adat.)

In serving these purposes, Batak adat, like Batak kinship, has undergone a number of changes both at the ideational and the social organizational levels.

In this paper I would like to investigate several of the major fronts on which one Batak adat system has adjusted and adapted to modern life. Most of my information will be drawn from tape recordings of the oratory at one spectacularly updated adat ceremony: a *horja bale* or funeral ceremony held in a Tapanuli village in 1976, hosted by a haji pilgrim, and attended by almost as many city migrants as homeland villagers. The society in question here is South Tapanuli or, more specifically, the South Tapanuli "traditional adat kingdom" around the market town of Sipirok, an area approximately 90 percent Muslim and 10 percent Protestant Christian. Although all Sipirok Batak, with the exception of a small Muhammadiyah faction of Muslim modernists, consider themselves *paradat*, "upholders of the adat," as we shall see, the content of that adat changes with virtually every adat ceremony.

The military metaphor of "fronts" seems apt here. From a sociology of knowledge perspective at least,<sup>4</sup> Sipirok Batak adat is today in pluralistic competition with the rival ideological claims of world Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Indonesian nationhood. Both in its religious and its political scope, Sipirok adat has lost ground. Though it is risky to reconstruct a history that is largely oral, up to the 1820s when the area was first proselytized for Islam Sipirok adat was probably a holistic system of village government, farming practice, spirit beliefs, kinship classification, and kin-related role behavior. The years since then have brought a number of assaults on this adat: from the 1850s onwards Dutch and German Protestant missionaries spread the gospel, and with it the virtues of literacy and non-farm work; Islam also deepened its influence on village life; the Dutch colonial government set up grammar and secondary schools and opened the floodgates to the rantau beyond Tapanuli; and finally, after the Revolution, the administrative agencies of the new Jakarta government displaced the traditional raja once and for all from any effective political control of the villages and traditional kingdoms. From an exalted position as arbiter of an entire moral and perceptual universe, then, Sipirok adat has today been reduced to little more than an oral literature, a system of rules and moral precepts on the family, and a round of family- and village-centered rite-of-passage ceremonies. The grand old political alliances of Sipirok adat are now reduced to ceremonial leagues of "raja adat"--impresario-like figures who are more stage managers of other families' ceremonies than the village chiefs their

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<sup>4</sup>The vocabulary developed by the sociologists Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, Thomas Luckmann, and Hansfried Keller for dealing with the "crisis of legitimacy" faced by traditional symbolic systems in modernizing countries is especially useful to the student of adat in Indonesia today. I borrow my use of "fronts" and "pluralistic competition" from their work. Particularly helpful in understanding Batak adat's currently precarious but nonetheless creative situation are Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), chapter 2, 2, "Legitimation"; and Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), chapters 1 and 2. See also Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Keller, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random house, 1973).

predecessors were. There have been major losses of territory in the religious realm too: many of the more stubbornly pagan ancestral spirits of the old adat have been consigned to the spiritual dustheap as the society has taken on more and more of monotheistic Muslim and Christian doctrine.

Yet the confrontation of Sipirok adat with modern, monotheistic life has not been a total rout. Sipirok Batak have in a sense adopted a shrewd "cut our losses" strategy in their efforts to maintain their adat world in a modernizing Indonesia. Oversimplifying greatly, one might say that those parts of the adat which they can reinterpret, they reinterpret with a vengeance; those parts of the adat deemed too *kolot* (pagan, old fashioned, village-bound), they drop. This reinterpretation of the adat has greatly expanded the metaphorical scope of its ritual symbolism.

The "cut our losses" approach has, in fact, resulted today in an actual renaissance of adat ceremonialism in the homeland villages and the towns. Rantau families, it should be noted, are some of the most ardent supporters and bankrollers of the adat ceremonies now being held in the homeland villages. For these city Batak, indeed, adat ceremonies may be emerging as the centerpiece of their "ethnic culture." As fewer and fewer of them even speak the Sipirok Batak language with their children, they seem to develop a corresponding enthusiasm for holding periodic adat ceremonies in their home villages. Their city-bred children seem almost like students on an anthropology field trip when they come back to the Tapanuli villages for three days or so of nonstop adat ceremonies; since so few of the Jakarta and Medan children are fluent in everyday Batak, much less in the high-flown language of the adat ceremonies, these adat weddings and funerals and so on must be nearly opaque to them.

In accommodating to new political and religious realities, Sipirok adat has been pruned back to its ceremonial core: adat today means largely adat ceremonialism, and it focuses on a series of lavish communal village rites commemorating births, marriages, new houses, and deaths in the recent or distant past. It is these adat ceremonies that offer a meeting place for rantau people and their village kinfolk, for oral and spatial symbols of the rantau experience and village life, for rantau money and village labor, and for Batak modernity and tradition.

Grand ceremonial gestures and their moral implications are, then, essentially what Sipirok adat is today. Adat ceremonies in the area seem to be undergoing rapid change in four main spheres. Particularly interesting for anthropologists are the various cultural strategies Batak are employing in changing their adat in these spheres.

First of all, there has been a marked expansion in the number of ceremonies. Sipirok people today say that this change has come mostly in the last twenty-five years. The number of ceremonies "handed down from time immemorial" is thought to have held steady through the Dutch period. Then the Japanese occupied the homeland area during World War II and "destroyed the adat" (largely, people say today, by dethroning the higher-level village and adat kingdom raja). During and for a while after the Revolution, adat ceremonialism was condemned by many Sipirok people, in public at least, as "feodal" (feudal in the pejorative

sense). Then, in the mid-1950s a son of one of the best-placed local lineages, who happened also to be a provincial official, decided to hold a full-scale adat wedding for one of his own sons. The wedding was a huge success and Sipirok ceremony-giving began its long climb back to the near-complete public acceptance it now enjoys. Today, at least fifteen big adat ceremonies (horja) are given in the Sipirok area each year, and each village has upwards of ten smaller-scale celebrations (*pangupa* ceremonies) annually.

Some of these ceremonies are, however, of a rather unexpected sort. According to the local experts, large-scale adat celebrations should be held on only four occasions: the birth of a child or grandchild; the entering of a new house; the arrival of a new daughter-in-law in a man's house (the marriage ceremony); or the commemoration of the death of an old person all of whose children are grown and married. (Horja for the formation of new villages and those marking the passage of adolescents into adulthood are no longer held.) In the last several years, however, horja have been held to celebrate the formation of a new ethnically-based denomination of the local Protestant church, for the inauguration of certain provincial officials, and for the dedication of new government buildings. Typical of a whole range of transformations of ritual practice are the new uses found for the *gondang* gong and drum orchestra of the horja ceremonies. Though as recently as ten years ago these instruments could not be played outside of horja and certainly not without the direct supervision of the raja, they are now established parts of the parades held in the town on Indonesian National Independence Day. The musicians are coming to see their contributions to the adat ceremonies as art; indeed, the raja themselves are beginning to consider their oratorical arts and the whole of horja ceremonialism as Batak "culture."<sup>5</sup>

Although such "new style" horja sometimes draw sharp comments or chuckles from some raja in the Sipirok area, these men usually simply decline to attend the offending ceremonies, leaving it to their fellow raja to make the requisite speeches.

Second, there has been a considerable change in the content, if not the delivery style, of the flowery orations (*kobar*) that are at the center of any Sipirok adat ceremony. These ceremonies were and are essentially speech-making feasts, where different kinship and political factions give long versified toasts to each other. Local standards of rhetoric hold that the fast-paced, proverb-filled speech is not only the most beautiful but the one most likely to convey blessings and good fortune to the target audience. Batak oratory was, and is, grounded in the supposed magical efficacy of certain proverbs and ancestral sayings.<sup>6</sup> Horja oratory, especially, should be phrased

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<sup>5</sup>For more information on this transformation of Batak adat from village custom to art form, see my "Angkola Advice to the Newlyweds: Adat or Art," in *Collected Papers of the 1977 Summer Indonesia Studies Conference, Madison, Wisconsin*, ed. Edward M. Bruner (Athens, Ohio: International Studies Publications, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup>For transcriptions, translations, and commentary on Sipirok and Angkola "blessing speeches" of this sort, see my "Angkola Batak Kinship through its Oral Literature" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978).

For information on similar conceptions of speech in Toba, see the introduction to H. N. Van der Tuuk, *A Grammar of Toba Batak* [1864: Tobasche Spraakkunst], trans. Jeune Scott-Kemball, ed. A. Teeuw and R. Roolvink (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971); and

almost entirely in the courtly old language of *umpama* (proverbs) and *pantun* (four line verses on, in this case, adat themes). However, many orators today, even in the horja, insinuate comments on life in Jakarta, on the national history of Indonesia, and, it is perhaps needless to add, on national development programs, into their kobar. These additions are accepted calmly by most raja; in fact, raja make some of the best speeches of this sort.

Third, there has been a change in the ceremonial personnel. Men of "dubious" genealogical background are now speaking as raja; non-Batak are beginning to attend the adat ceremonies (sometimes as brides); and great Landrover-loads of rantau Batak are participating in village ceremonies though they often have only a passing acquaintance with ceremonial adat protocol and the standards of horja poetics and rhetoric.

Last, there has been a change in the economic background of the ceremonies. Once, these ceremonies were financed by *gotong royong* (pulling together, helping each other out) among kinsmen of the host family. Today, individual households, often from the cities, will sometimes finance an entire horja celebration. This practice is directly contrary to the "adat of the rajas," the most systematized and, purportedly, the most "genuine" version of the adat.

There are obviously several versions, or at least alternative interpretations, of the adat. These are best examined with reference to their "carriers." There is, on the one hand, the group of ceremonial experts, most of whom tend to stress the "unchanging essence" of the adat even if they do allow a few changes of phraseology. On the other, there is the more overtly adaptive group, often based in the rantau and the larger homeland market towns, who gladly admit considerable changes in phraseology and even ceremonial form into the adat. Standing in contrast to these two groups with their common commitment to the adat are the local Muhammadiyah members, the Muslim modernists who brand the central speeches of the adat ceremonies as blasphemies and who refuse to attend many of the adat weddings, funerals, and so on.

One of the most intriguing questions, though one largely beyond the scope of this paper, concerns the standards Sipirok Batak use to determine whether a certain contemporary adat practice is "genuine," "newfangled," "ad hoc," "funny," and so on. Answering this adequately would demand a full folk esthetics of oratory, dance, cooking, ritual paraphernalia, and music, but a few of the more obvious criteria for determining whether an adat ceremony or a section of one is "acceptable" or "unacceptable" can at least be suggested. Any particular ceremony, it seems, must be able to be portrayed as some variation on one of the basic ceremonies in the "adat of our ancestors"; for example, a horja celebrating the completion of a new government building is portrayed in the oratory as a *horja masuk bagas na imbaru*, a horja-for-entering-a-new-house. Second, all the standard horja components--processions, presentations of food, ritual dances, and speech-making sessions--must take place in some form. It is essentially *within* these

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J. C. Vergouwen, *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northern Sumatra* [1933: *Het Rechtsleven der Toba-Batak*], trans. Jeune Scott-Kemball (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964).

components that one finds considerable variations today. For instance, as long as a wedding horja includes a series of *tapián raya bangunan* speeches (speeches delivered at the village bathing pool, to "firm up the soul" of the bridal couple and the mothers and infants of the host household and some of their kin), the raja giving the actual speeches can weave in new elements as they see fit. Finally, extremely heavy use either of Arabic quotations from Muslim prayers or of Indonesian language phrases is considered bad form, especially in the speech-making congresses most directly under the control of the ceremonial raja.

Sipirok adat practice today provides numerous examples of all these processes of institutional and cultural adjustment. Adat ceremonies are used to celebrate a townsman's return from the pilgrimage to Mecca, raja adat are called in to celebrate the inauguration of a new *bupati* (chief administrator) for South Tapanuli, Arabic prayer phrases are peppered throughout the ceremonial speeches of adat congresses, and so on. The very clothes Sipirok people wear on formal occasions are good documents on this curiously adjustive adat of theirs. It has now become standard practice for men to attend big adat ceremonies in Western-style dark business suits, around which they wrap a Muslim style sarong, and over which they drape a traditional Batak *ulos* (ceremonial shawl). In fact, one Sipirok adat ceremony-cum-national celebration went this pattern of male fashion one step further. Held to dedicate a new police station--the first ceremony of this kind and viewed with considerable local amusement--it saw a number of police and army personnel from the subprovincial capital attending in full military uniform. During the adat dances, an indispensable part of any large adat celebration, the officers further decked themselves out in the red, black, gold, and beaded Sipirok ulos. Doubly uniformed, they failed, however, to be doubly authoritative.

In lieu of reviewing all these newfangled adat practices in Sipirok today, I will concentrate now on one horja bale. This ceremony was a funerary rite held years after the death of a lineage ancestor of the host family. The horja (Indonesian, *kerja*, a work, an undertaking) involved the dedication of an imposing funeral obelisk (*tugu*) to this ancestor, who had migrated with his son and son-in-law into the Sipirok area from the more northern Toba Batak homeland some eleven generations ago. This lineage is today intricately linked through marriage alliance to the Siregar, the dominant, pioneer clan of the entire Sipirok area. The host of the ceremony was a haji who had nonetheless remained a self-conscious supporter of adat after his return from Mecca. Moreover, he was well-connected in provincial government circles, and so invited a large contingent from the local DPR (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, the Representative Assembly of South Tapanuli) to attend. The extra-adat social identities of these participants were much commented upon in the horja's ceremonial speeches.

I tape-recorded large portions of the speeches from this three-day ceremony, and have translated portions of these Batak-language texts here. (The Indonesian language is widely known but rarely used among Batak in South Tapanuli market towns and villages; adat oratory is always in Sipirok Batak.) I have disguised the location of the village and the clan identity of the participants, for this adat ceremony was the occasion of more argument and backbiting than most. Batak adat ceremonies are, on the surface, almost cloyingly full of fellow feeling

## TORTOR DANCING



Plate 1



Plate 2

Circles of dancers are arranged according to kinship category vis-à-vis the host family. Use of the ceremonial ulos shawl is confined to married adults, and the way it is worn indicates whether the dancers are wife-givers, wife-takers, or fellow kahanggi-mates of the host family. Men dancing as Raja representatives from various adat domains also wear the ulos in ways to signify their rajaship position.

and homiletics on the peaceful village life, but actually involve considerable bickering and jockeying for power by rival lineages.

The horja was a modern adat event par excellence. Financed by a series of fortunate real estate deals in Jakarta, it was attended by almost as many city migrants as homeland villagers; it was boycotted by a major faction of the lineage in question; its final day was highlighted by the impressive arrival of the party of government officials from the subprovincial capital; and, typically, all the speeches were broadcast over a cranky loudspeaker system. (No Sipirok adat ceremony today is complete without its loudspeaker system. These almost invariably fail to work properly, and timid grandmothers, microphone in hand, find their speeches punctuated by a variety of jarring whirs and metallic screeches.)

On many counts, then, this horja bale can be taken as a text on Sipirok's changing adat system. Through the tape transcripts we can investigate in some ethnographic detail one small example of the usually vaguely defined process of Indonesian syncretism, whereby local adat worlds are reconciled to world religion and the Indonesian national state.

#### Sipirok Batak Homeland Society

Several features of Sipirok society most directly at issue in the adat ceremony here can be reviewed briefly before we go on to look at the horja in detail.

The *kecamatan* or county of Sipirok encompasses the old *harajaon* ("adat kingdoms" or "chieftaincies") of Sipirok, Baringin-Bungabondar, and Parau Sorat, each containing over ten wet-rice-farming villages, clustered around a market town named Sipirok. The area is overwhelmingly agricultural, with all village families cultivating wet rice and garden produce. Many families are also engaged in the cash cropping of peanuts, green vegetables, coffee, and the currently fashionable cloves. Many townsmen also work for the government, as schoolteachers, civil service clerks, administrators, policemen, road maintenance men, and military personnel. In addition, the town has the small component of storekeepers, coffee stall owners, minibus operators, and male and female market vendors common to all Tapanuli towns.

Sipirok people pride themselves on their history of success first in the Dutch, and now the national school systems. Thanks to a long tradition of good primary and secondary schools in South Tapanuli and a huge network of relatives in large cities all over Indonesia, Sipirok families have often been successful in garnering advanced degrees for their children. For a student to *martitel* (sport an advanced degree) is a great badge of progress for his entire family. The particular village hosting the ceremony to be described below has many such be-titled sons and daughters. Indeed, the villagers claim that more of their people now live in the rantau than in the village. This would not be surprising since the village has only about sixty households,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>This is the normal size for such farming villages laid out on a short expanse of plain between the rugged mountains of this part of upper South Tapanuli.

and its people, like most Sipirok Batak, pride themselves on being a progressive, resourceful, sharp-witted, and crafty population who have not only scored economic and political successes in the cities but have done so without relinquishing their ties back home. The ties still linking the city and village are characteristic of the Sipirok political system which has traditionally rested on strong kin-based alliances.

### Political Alliance

According to folk history, the triple chieftaincy of Sipirok, Baringin-Bungabondar, and Parau Sorat was founded some twelve generations ago by the three sons of the Siregar clansman who pioneered the area from the Toba Batak homeland to the north (the "original homeland" of all the Batak people).<sup>8</sup> Members of some ten other clans have moved into the area and have affiliated themselves with the dominant Siregar clan either by receiving Siregar girls as brides or giving their own sisters and daughters to the Siregar. Lineages of these other clans have founded villages of their own, and "own the adat" in those village areas, just as the Siregar raja most directly descended from the three founders are thought to "own the adat" of the entire triple harajaon area. These raja, as we shall see, are mostly farmers who take on the raja role only in adat ceremonies.

Villages are linked internally and one to another in an idiom of patrilineal clan descent and marriage alliance. In fact, the core metaphor of folk politics today remains the *dalihan na tolu* ("three stoned hearth"), an arrangement of three stones set equidistant from each other on the ground to support a cookpot. In kinship terms, one stone is said to be *kahanggi* (a man's close lineage mates of his patrilineal clan), the second *anakboru* (a comparable lineage segment of three to five generations' depth that has received brides from the first group and therefore stands in a ritually subservient relationship to it), and the third *mora* ("wealthy"--another comparable lineage segment that has long provided the first group with brides and therefore stands in a ritually superordinate relationship to it). Mora is the source of good fortune, blessings, and human and agricultural fertility, while anakboru is characterized in adat oratory as the mora's "cane over the slippery spots, torch in the darkness"--mora's physical protectors and all-round step-'n-fetch-its.

Though this triad of marriage alliance relationships was once played out through labor exchanges and sizeable rice payments, it is ceasing to be central to Sipirok economics and agriculture today. Ceremonial goods, bride price payments, "blessing speeches," and, of course, brides, are still exchanged and keep the *dalihan na tolu* a viable social system in Sipirok, but otherwise it is losing ground to a variety of national development programs, government organizations, and religious and educational institutions. The *dalihan na tolu* metaphor, however, is still used to explain the social structure of indi-

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<sup>8</sup>For local views of this genealogical history of the Batak in Sipirok, see Ompu Gorga Siregar and Sutan Habiaran Siregar, *Perkembangan Turunan Toga Siregar* (Medan: private publication, 1974), and Rodgers, "Angkola Batak Kinship," ch. 2. If the reader is particularly stouthearted, see also Mangaraja Onggang Parlindungan, *Tuanku Rao* (Jakarta: Sinar Pengharapan, 1964).

vidual villages and the more encompassing harajaon domains. Each village has a founding lineage (its "raja"--the term is coming to mean all male descendants of the village founder and not just one senior lineage) and, usually, several resident anakboru and mora families. These families will have kahanggi mates of their own in villages all over the triple harajaon. Many, in fact, are linked through descent and marriage alliance to families in the neighboring subethnic areas of Padang Bolak, Angkola Julu, Angkola Jae, and Mandailing. The village founding line is itself linked to other kahanggi groups in villages all over the triple harajaon and beyond. In practice, this means that everywhere families are linked to each other in a dense mesh of ties through clan descent and asymmetrical marriage alliance.<sup>9</sup> Village formation too is typically couched in these terms. Sons can split off from their fathers' villages to form "son villages." Entire villages can be anakboru villages to the villages from which they split off; this simply means that the new village founders stand in a son-in-law or subservient wife-receiver relationship to the owners of the older village. The entire harajaon is in effect a cluster of villages conceptualizing their unity in terms of clan descent and ranked marriage alliance.

Beyond simple dalihan na tolu links, there is an overarching hierarchy of rajaships in the area. These too are conceived in an idiom of village founders, and patrilineal descent. Relations between raja may also be phrased in terms of established patterns of bride exchange. Seen from the viewpoint of the people in a single village (as happens in any adat ceremony), there are five ascending levels of raja. All have set roles to play in adat ceremonial, a set position on the roster of orators, and, to some modest extent, a continuing role in the moral governance of the area.

The five levels of rajaships are:

1) The village's own raja, the *harajaon parhutaon*. Under the Dutch, each village had only one raja, a man with demonstrable everyday political functions as the village headman.<sup>10</sup> Today, the Sipirok raja system has "gone popular"--the lowliest rice farmer is generally outfitted with some such grand title as Baginda this or Mangaraja that. In many villages, the most direct descendants of the village founders have long since departed for the prosperous life in the rantau cities, leaving the Tapanuli villages in the hands of the descendants of junior lineages. Thus, any male patrilineal descendant of the village founders can speak as the raja from that village at adat ceremonies held in other villages.

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<sup>9</sup>Edmund Leach has described the many political uses of such a kinship system in his anthropological work on the quite similar Kachin society of highland Burma; the southern Batak put their metaphors and institutions of family relationship to similar political use. Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), and Leach, "The Structural Implications of Matrilineal Cross Cousin Marriage," in Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone Press, 1961). For more on Sipirok kinship, see Rodgers, "Angkola Batak Kinship."

<sup>10</sup>For comparative information on Batak politics, see Lance Castles, *Statelessness and Stateforming Tendencies among the Batak before Colonial Rule*, Pre-Colonial State Systems in SE Asia Series (Kuala Lumpur: Council of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975).

Such harajaon parhutaon raja speak first in the major adat congresses, after the various dalihan na tolu partners of the host family.

2) The *harajaon torbing balok*, raja from the "villages all around" the host village. Some larger villages have a few satellite villages, which count as harajaon torbing balok; others simply include the nearest five or six villages as their harajaon torbing balok. In today's rather ad hoc adat politics, the raja of a host village may have a large hand in defining membership in this level of raja, though during the colonial period, according to area experts today, such decisions were in the hands of the higher level *kepala kuria* (see below).

3) The *harajaon na mangaluati*. These are the raja from the surrounding harajaon comparable to the Sipirok/Baringin-Bungabondar/Parau Sorat complex: say, the raja from Padang Bolak, Angkola Julu, Angkola Jae, and several areas in Mandailing. People from other large harajaon are sometimes added to this group, depending on the origins of the men attending the horja. Toba Batak, for instance, though they have no such harajaon system as those in the south, can be asked to speak as "raja from Toba."

In fact, this harajaon na mangaluati category is extremely elastic in present-day adat. It has even been stretched to accommodate American anthropologists, and female ones at that. In the ceremony under discussion, for instance, I was put into the order of speakers as the "raja's daughter from Tano Columbus" ("Columbusland"). The *paralok-alok* (chanter in charge of calling out the order of speakers) was my putative *amangboru*, or father's sister's husband, given my adoption into the Siregar clan a year and a half before. Men of this amangboru's lineage traditionally married women of my particular group of Siregar women, and, because of this, we stood in one of the classic Batak joking relationships with each other. In fact, this "Columbusland" line probably had more to do with this relationship than it did with traditional Batak politics.<sup>11</sup>

Joking relationships aside, this practice of putting non-Batak populations into the order of speakers at this harajaon na mangaluati level may indicate that homeland Sipirok Batak think of such "ethnic groups" as the Javanese, the Acehnese, the Minangkabau, and so on, as essentially other "adat kingdoms" surrounding their Tapanuli homeland.

4) The core Siregar raja descended from the Sipirok/Baringin-Bungabondar/Parau Sorat founders. These are called the *harajaon haruaya mardomu bulung* (Raja-of-the-Banyan-Tree-Whose-Leaves-Meet-in-the-Middle).

5) Finally, there is the *raja panusunan bulung* himself (Raja-Gatherer-of-Leaves), the ultimate master of ceremonies of the celebration. Under the Dutch, each major harajaon (Sipirok, Baringin-Bungabondar, Parau Sorat) had a *kepala kuria*, a raja in the full political sense of administering the area for the colonial government. Sipirok people today single out this form of rajaship as particularly "feodal" and seem in general quite glad that it has been left behind with the

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<sup>11</sup>Another time, in another horja, I found myself dubbed "Honored Lady from the harajaon of Chicago."

colonial past. Each horja today is presided over by a raja panusunan bulung, the nearest thing in present-day Sipirok to a kepala kuria, but this is a purely ceremonial position.

According to most Siregar raja, the raja panusunan bulung of any area horja should be a Siregar and a member of the harajaon haruaya mardomu bulung. But village clusters dominated by other clans sometimes elect to use one of their own local adat experts in this role. This happened at the particular horja bale under discussion: one of the more accomplished orators of the Dolok clan (a pseudonym for my host's clan here) served as panusunan bulung.

Obviously, all of these rajaships have lost much of their temporal power in the modern period. They are essentially ceremonial offices today, just as the grand old harajaon portrayed so vigorously in the adat oratory are now largely kingdoms of words and fine gestures. The everyday administration of the area is in the hands of the civil servants of the national government (the camat and the locally elected village headmen). These administrators generally cultivate a benign hands-off attitude toward the adat ceremonial government of the area, taking care to put in an appearance on the final day of major adat ceremonies. Significantly, the civil servants do not take part in their capacity as government officials in the nighttime *alok2* (speech-making) sessions of the raja. This is the most important congress of raja in Sipirok adat ceremonial, and is the scene of the most elegant speech making on traditional political themes. However, camat sometimes speak in *alok2* sessions in their capacity as raja of their home villages or as *dalihan na tolu* partners of the host family.<sup>12</sup>

### Religious Background

The social history of Islam and Protestant Christianity in Sipirok also shapes current adat practice. We have seen that the area is approximately 90 percent Muslim and 10 percent Christian. Sipirok Batak pride themselves on harboring no "pagans" (*siparbegu*). Many villages have both Muslim and Christian families; a minority are all Muslim, or, much more rarely, all Christian. Religious intermarriage is discouraged from both sides, but it happens anyway in every *kahanggi*. One spouse is obligated to switch over to the other religion for the marriage to be celebrated; considerable hard feelings result and may separate families that should, according to stricts adat, be on the friendliest terms. Given a continuing history of mixed marriages over several generations, however, a young man may find that his ideal marriage choice (his *boru tulang* or mother's brother's daughter) is a member of the opposite religion. A marriage between the pair would therefore be strongly encouraged on one level and discouraged with equal force on another. I have no statistical information on marriage choice in such situations.

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<sup>12</sup>In the horja bale here, a large party of government officials from Padangsidempuan, the seat of the subprovincial government, arrived on the final morning of the ceremony, of course missing the previous night's *alok2* congress. They seemed to attend the ceremony more in the capacity of visiting dignitaries than as intimate ritual participants. Some were local Batak, some were Batak from other homelands, and some were non-Batak.

Sipirok was first introduced to Islam by the Bonjol armies sweeping northward from Minangkabau in the 1820s.<sup>13</sup> The Sipirok Siregar writer Mangaraja Onggang Parlindungan provides a spirited and detailed if rather idiosyncratic history of the proselytization of the area in his book *Tuanku Rao*.<sup>14</sup>

Protestantism arrived in the 1850s.<sup>15</sup> Sipirok was, in fact, the first Batak area to experience Dutch and German missionary efforts. After a decade or so of dubious success in constructing Bible schools and converting villagers in this already heavily Muslim area, some of the missionaries moved northward into the still-pagan Silindung Valley and the Toba homeland areas. There, under the aegis of the near-charismatic Reverend Nommensen, the church made spectacular gains. These northern areas are almost entirely Christian today.

Sipirok Protestants see themselves as a somewhat beleaguered minority in the deeply Muslim southern homelands; this may help to explain their unusual piety and loyalty to the church. Yet they participate fully in local adat ceremonies, differing from their Muslim neighbors only in omitting Arabic prayer phrases from their orations. Some Christians work New Testament examples into their "advice speeches" for adat ceremonies, much as Muslim speakers draw on the social teachings of Islam for the same occasions. Both Sipirok Christians and many Muslims profess to be "one in the adat" and make it a point of pride to invite people to their adat ceremonies on a *dalihan na tolu*, and not a religious basis.

The local Muhammadiyah members stand in contrast to both Christians and other Muslims on this issue of adat and world religion. Stressing Middle Eastern texts unadulterated by local customs, they refuse to take part in many adat ceremonies, especially those involving ritual dancing and the ritual "reading" of certain ceremonial foods, weapons, and articles of clothing, regarded as particularly blasphemous.<sup>16</sup> Their views are thus antagonistic to the haji host of our ceremony, who cultivates the adat in its full ceremonial sense and avers that adat is fully *cocok* (in accord) with Islam.

### The Ceremony

The horja, like most adat ceremonies of this size, was financed largely with money made in the rantau cities, though the villagers contributed the rice for the three days of meals and much of the labor

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<sup>13</sup>See Siagian, "Bibliography on the Batak," pp. 165-69.

<sup>14</sup>See n. 8 above. Incidentally, Mangaraja Onggang's voraciously inclusive approach to Batak history is entirely typical of Sipirok thought. His knack for synthesizing quite diverse areas of social thought resembles the way other Batak fasten their adat to world religion and nationhood.

<sup>15</sup>Siagian, "Bibliography on the Batak," pp. 165-169. The HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestant*, the original Batak church) publishes a yearly almanac with historical information on the early missionary period; the new, ethnically-based HKBP-Angkola, headquartered in Sipirok, publishes a stream of revisionist church history.

<sup>16</sup>For translations of typical "reading" speeches of this sort, see Rodgers, "Angkola Batak Kinship," ch. 3.



Plate 3

Grand tugu to Oji Baginda Makmur's ancestor, topped with model of a bush common to the area the ancestor pioneered. The monument rises out of fields off the side of a mountain road some 5 kms. from the home village. A lineage genealogy is prominently displayed for the benefit of passers-by.



Plate 4

After the horja's sacrificial buffalo has been slain, the host kahanggi affix carved crossbars to the ends of the bale "funeral house" over the graves of Oji Baginda Makmur's parents, before the procession moves on to the tugu site itself.

of seeing the festivities through to completion (the host's kahanggi and anakboru are the hard workers here--mora simply sit and get waited on).

The money came through several lucky real estate deals in Jakarta. Land prices are high in the capital city, and Batak families (like this one) who bought land in the 1920s and '30s and sell it today stand to realize large profits. So large, in fact, that Oji Baginda Makmur (my pseudonym for the host) was able to build a cement tugu twelve meters high in memory of his lineage ancestor (Plate 3) and "beautify" (*pauli*) the graves of his parents and grandparents into the bargain (Plate 4). The ceremony was thus a multiple-*bale* (funeral monument) dedication.

The ceremonial participants, over 200 strong, moved from the grave-sites of Oji Baginda Makmur's parents, to his grandparents' bale-site in the next village, and finally to the tugu itself, some five kilometers from the host's village. The last stretch was covered in a veritable fleet of chartered buses.

Oji Baginda Makmur's horja bale included the standard ceremonial events for funeral adat of this scale. An early-morning speechmaking session on the first day secured the raja's permission to play the gongdang instruments and to begin the formal kobar. Ritual dancing of groups linked by dalihan na tolu ties went on almost constantly in the front room of the host's house (Plates 1 and 2). The host's household and their dalihan na tolu partners went through a *pataon tondi* ceremony to "firm up their souls" for the final day's somewhat dangerous procession out to the tugu sites (souls are particularly liable to wander or come under attack from spirits at certain points in horja ceremonies). The final night of the ceremony saw the alok<sup>2</sup> congress of the raja, and the horja's concluding day consisted of the trips to the various grave and tugu sites and the final return to the host's household to eat the special mound of sacrificial foods. A water buffalo had been sacrificed at dawn that final day, and many of the womenfolk spent the morning preparing the "luck-giving" mound of rice and cooked meat that the raja and the host would eat on their return from the tugu site about noon.

Although there were so many participants in the ceremony the list of people not attending rivals in sociological interest the group who did. There was, first of all, the village's other Mecca pilgrim, an old man of good repute in adat circles who had for years been Oji Baginda's close friend, trusted mora partner, and financial mentor. But they had had a falling out several years back and now studiously avoided each other's adat ceremonies. This meant that each had to spend a good deal of time out of the village, since both were enthusiastic ceremony-givers (they were the only ones in the village wealthy enough to give horja). The rival Oji was pointedly off on a trip to Medan at the time of this ceremony.

As already mentioned, a rival faction of the lineage also boycotted the horja bale. This was a kahanggi group closely related to Oji Baginda's that argued that its apical lineage ancestor was the senior brother, i.e., older than Oji Baginda Makmur's. This rival lineage went so far as to hold a horja bale of its own the following week.

Lineage disputes of this sort today indeed are increasingly the result of status competition between lineage members in rantau cities rather than of arguments over land or inheritance in the villages. Large-scale adat ceremonies are excellent ways to display new wealth, and rival lineages vie to attract the most impressive roster of adat orators, sure that the word will spread quickly from village to village.

\* \* \*

Two parts of our horja offer particularly rich information on the interface of adat and world-religion, and adat and nationhood: the alok2 session and the actual tugu dedication.

Oji Baginda Makmur's very titles immediately suggest his dual loyalty to adat and Islam. He has, after all, completed the pilgrimage to Mecca and proudly uses the "haji" ("oji") designation. But he also uses the harajaon title Baginda. Harajaon titles, such as Sutan, Mangaraja, Baginda, and, less frequently, Tuanku or Tuongku are given at horja to married men who, in theory, have some expertise in the adat. In practice, the greenest Jakarta civil servant may be made a Sutan or a Mangaraja at a kinsman's horja, simply by virtue of his relationship to the host. In Oji Baginda Makmur's case, however, his title reflects demonstrated skill in the oratorical forms and long-time participation in the adat ceremonies of other local families.

#### a. Alok2 Session

This is the speech-making congress involving representatives from every level of harajaon; upwards of forty men crowd into the front room of the host's house, and thirty or so make fast-paced, verse-filled speeches before the session ends. In the course of the alok2, the host family secures formal permission from the "owners of the adat" to sacrifice a water buffalo ("the livestock of the raja"), to use the full ceremonial horja dress (another possession of the raja), and to dedicate a tugu, celebrate a marriage or a grandchild's birth, or whatever.

Under the joint direction of the paralok-alok chanter (who sings out the order of speakers in a vocabulary of set adat phrases) and the raja panusunan bulung, the order of speakers proceeds through ever-widening circles out from the host family. Women speak first: the wives of *suhut* (the immediate host household), the wives of their kahanggi, their anakboru (the sisters and daughters of the male host, at a minimum), their *pisang raut* (anakboru of anakboru--for example, the daughters of the host's daughters), and, in all horja but weddings, the wives of mora. Then male dalihan na tolu partners take their turn. The host speaks first for the *suhut*, followed by his brothers and sons, their kahanggi, and sometimes by their *kahanggi pareban* (other kahanggi groups that share the *suhut*'s mora). The host's various male anakboru (his daughters' and sisters' husbands and their sons) come next, seconding his requests to the assembled raja, followed by the male *pisang raut*. All these speeches are then "given blessings" (*dituai*) by the *suhut*'s mora. The raja of the home village and the Council of Village Elders then second the *suhut*'s request to hold the ceremony, and the floor returns to the raja panusunan bulung. He proceeds to call in

turn on the hierarchy of raja, outlined above, to state their position on the request. Invariably, each raja approves the request, taking care to defer to the raja panusunan bulung's "greater expertise in these matters." Once the raja panusunan bulung has provisionally agreed to the suhut's request, he asks what animal they hope to sacrifice. "The livestock of the raja, '*janami* (our raja)," comes the immediate, customary reply.

At this point, the raja panusunan bulung makes certain that the suhut will not let the animal loose at night or fail to kill it quickly (both near disastrously inauspicious events). He then goes on to give his formal permission to continue the ceremony, in what should be the finest speech of the evening.

Since Oji Baginda Makmur's alok2 speech was rather more conversational and rambling than the usual alok2 oration, it might be helpful to look first at a more self-consciously traditional specimen of this genre. The following speech, taken from this horja bale, was delivered by the paralok-alok chanter himself, Baginda Sori Langkat Hutasuhut, speaking as the raja from the neighboring adat domain of Angkola. Baginda Sori Langkat is one of the most accomplished orators in South Tapanuli, and Oji Baginda Makmur knew he was very lucky to get the man for his horja.<sup>17</sup>

Classical alok2 orations of this sort follow a set agenda of points. The speaker first thanks the chanter for calling on him to speak, then praises the assembled raja; recounts how he was invited to the horja; gives his harajaon domain's official consent to the host household's request; expresses his deference to the greater wisdom of the presiding raja panusunan bulung; and finally signs off with a barrage of "luck-bestowing" proverbs and pantuns.

I have separated the verses of the speech into a series of fairly self-contained units, though in the actual tape recording, the speech is delivered in the usual nonstop, hypnotic Sipirok alok2 style.

Olo da, panyuanan ni jelok Hatubuan ni sitata Mauli ate da na pande maralok-alok Na baun marhata-hata	Yes indeed, with the sowing of green melons, With the growing of bananas; Thanks to you, then, polished alok2 chanter, Adept at saying words.
Anggo dung tu Pargarutan Lalu tu Sibualbuali Anggo dung do dielpasan Nanggo tarbaen be mandali	If we've gone to Pargarutan, We've since passed Mt. Sibualbuali; If the floor is passed to us, Hesitating is not countenanced.
Dipardau ni unte tonggi Na mardabu to ogar-ogar Madung bolkas tu simanangi Ima panyobut ni goar ni Baginda Sori Langkat Anak ni Hutasuhut	At the falling of the sweet orange, Falling to the bamboo mat; Already heard by Ear-the-Hearer, The mention of the name of Baginda Sori Langkat, Son of the clan Hutasuhut.

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<sup>17</sup>It should be noted that Baginda Sori Langkat often speaks of himself in the third person in this speech, as "the raja from Angkola"; words that are untranslated from the Batak here are names of villages or local plants.

Dangka ni tali mada on  
 Ampean ni andor baliang  
 Na mangalusi mada hami on  
 Dihata ni suhut sihabolonan

Antong! Jadi botima da  
 Haji Baginda Makmur  
 Di tolu ari na dung salpu  
 Ro do nangkinani  
 Doli-doli na lingkas langka  
 Dua sauduran  
 Sada mardetar  
 Na sada marabang-abang  
 Sada manyurduhon burangir  
 Sada mandok hata na denggan  
 Suang songon on tehe, raja i  
 Sian napa-napa ni Lubuk Raya  
 Marborngin to alaman ni  
     Huta Dolok on  
 Di ari Saptu songon on

Baen nada adong ambat bingkolang  
 Disuhut pe nada adong halangan  
 Nayang do nangkinani langka ni raja i  
 Sian alaman ni Lobu Layan

Manuat jumomba jomba  
 Manongkap jumule-jule  
 Mamolus tor mangarobaen  
 Manopi-nopi harangan

Marudan marlas ni ari  
     ?            Aek Dolok  
 Manujuhon Aek Si Rontang  
 Manunjukkon jop ni roha  
 Sareto patandahon bohi  
 Tu harajaon bona bulu

Dison payak surat tumbaga holing  
 Ima surat pusako ni ompunta  
 Na jumolo sundut na robian  
 Na so     ?     diari udan  
 Na so mosok dipangan api

Ima burangir na hombang  
 Tampuk na marabi tu ujung  
 Ujung na marabi tu tonga  
 Mangihutkon pangalaho on  
 Anso hombang mada nangkinani  
 Adat ni anak ni raja  
 Rap dohot adat ni anak na mora

Manjagit holos ni suhut sihabolonan  
 Sanga bia ma rupani  
 Anso tulus dohot saut  
 Na niparsinta ni suhut sihabolonan

Branches of the *tali* plant this be,  
 A place for climber vines to weave about;  
 Answering indeed our task here,  
 To the words of the Great-Host-Household,

Indeed! Like this then,  
 Haji Baginda Makmur,  
 Three days already past,  
 Along came  
 Comely young men striding smartly  
 Two-of-a-footfall  
 One wore ceremonial turban,  
 The other wore brimmed hat of rajas,  
 One presented invitation-betel-quid,  
 The other spoke goodness-bringing words:  
 "Like this then, Raja,  
 From the foothill country of Mt. Lubuk Raya,  
 Come spend the night in the village of  
     Huta Dolok,  
 All of a Saturday night" like this,

There being no hindrance on the way  
 Great-Host-Household too has met no obstacle  
 Light indeed was the step of that raja  
 Coming from the village of Lobu Layan

Springing over obstacles on his way,  
 Leaping over depressions in the ground,  
 Climbing over rugged hills, going down  
     gentle grades  
 Hovering along the edge of forestlands

In rainy days, in heat of day  
 [Following the course of] the River Dolok  
 Headed toward the River Rontang  
 Coming to show joy of heart  
 As one who comes to meet  
 The harajaon of this home village

Here be letters-writ-on-leaves  
 Magic letters of our ancestors  
 First generations in the past  
 Betel quid not dampened on rainy days  
 Betel quid not scorched by fire

Raja's betel laid on a plate  
 Their stems toward the edge  
 Their tips meeting at plate's center  
 So that like this leaf arrangement  
 May all be joined as one, going the same  
     direction,  
 The adat of the Sons-of-Raja  
 The adat of the Sons-of-Noblemen

May they accept the wishes of  
     Great-Host-Household  
 And whatever might be wished  
 Be it realized and accomplished  
 All that is hoped for by Great-Host Household



Plate 5

The paralok-alok chanter tortor dancing, in his capacity as the raja from the harajaon of Angkola Julu.

Ia anggo haroro ni raja i do  
 nangkinani  
 Sian Luat ni Angkola  
 Nada on bolaon hotang  
 Mangalului panyipian  
 Suang do on takuju padang  
 Mangalului pardomuan

Bus pe ro hami tuson  
 Na dohot mada hami patumbuk  
 padomu-domuhon  
 Sanga bia ma rupani  
 Anso tulus dohot saut  
 Na niparsinta ni suhut sihabolonan

Tai antong tutu  
 Haru hami dok pe songon i  
 Nada da halakkaan abara ambubu  
 Baen dison do ompui nangkinani

Na pargaja ni Silibung  
 Na margadingkon sian Sosa  
 Raja na martua marlidung  
 Na malo sumalung roha

Ibana do artina na tahu  
 Mangatap dohot mangetong  
 Sanga songon dia panggambar  
 Dohot pangatur ni ibana  
 I do antong na diihutkononnami!

Ia anggo hami do rupani i  
 Dohot pendek ni hata dohonan  
 Hami jagit do antong

Antong, Baginda Makmur  
 Pendekna, nada on mangangkok tu  
 SiLayang-Layang  
 Manuat tu SiMago-Mago  
 Nada on anggo dilanglang pangusayang  
 Olat ni na taralo gogo  
 Sintap ni na hami boto!

Jadi on pe da, ompung rajanami  
 Raja Panusunan Bulung  
 Laing na dohot mada raja i  
 sian Luat ni Angkola  
 Pasahat pasanggalkon  
 Sanga bia ma anso tulus dohot saut  
 Na diparsinta ni suhut sihabolonan on

And as for the coming here of that raja then  
 From the Domain of Angkola  
 Not this one then who splits mat-rattan  
 And takes part off to the side  
 Rather, like the mountain streams flowing  
 into a plainland  
 Are we, searching for one place-of-meeting

Even though we come here as raja  
 Certainly we go along in perfecting, in  
 helping fuse,  
 Whatever is hoped for  
 By Great-Host-Household  
 So that all is realized well.

But then indeed  
 Even though we say such things  
 Not we who bear the burdens, make the  
 decisions here  
 Since right here with us is that Revered  
 Grandparent

Elephant-owner of Silibung  
 Taking tusk-ivory from Sosa  
 The Raja of luck-giving words  
 The one adept at fusing hearts

He is the one of course who knows  
 How to measure and to count  
 And of course whatever picture  
 Or situation's measure he derives  
 That surely will be the word we follow!

And as for us then  
 In brief words we put it here  
 We accept indeed [the request of  
 Great-Host-Household]

Well then Baginda Makmur  
 In short, climb uphill to  
 SiLayang-Layang  
 Go downhill to SiMago-Mago  
 Not we who put obstacles in hope's way  
 We do what we can  
 Beyond that we cannot know.

Well then indeed Grandfather our Raja  
 Raja Panusunan Bulung  
 Again we go along, that Raja  
 from the Domain of Angkola  
 In presenting, in firming up [Great-Host-  
 Household's request to Raja Panusunan  
 Bulung]  
 So that all be realized and accomplished  
 With what is hoped for in Great-Host-  
 Household's heart.

Songon na hami dokkon nangkinani  
 Anso ulang nangkin na songon  
 Hotang na tangging  
 Disira na sanggolam  
 Ulang ma antong roha manjangga  
     manangging  
 Manjanggalkon mata modom!

And as we said back there  
 May nothing here be like  
 Rattan mats pulled taut  
 Like salt by the fistful  
 May hearts and thoughts not jar and jostle  
 Disturbing eyes of sleep!

Anso satahi mada tu SiGolam-Golam  
 Manyalu Si Mauma-Auma  
 Anso sinok mata tarpodom  
 Diobankon sonang ni roha!!

So that we go all of a group to SiGolam-Golam  
 [Together we head for] Si Mauma-Auma  
 So that soundly our eyes might sleep  
 Carried off by peace of heart!!

Botima da na baun na pandenami!!

That then, alok2 chanter, adept and  
 polished!!

It is notable that Baginda Sori Langkat uses no Arabic prayer phrases here, though like most of the raja at this ceremony he is a Muslim. As a sensitive connoisseur of adat oratory, he prefers to deal entirely in old-fashioned adat proverbs and metaphorical speech, much of it taken from the superb chanted sagas (*turizian*) of South Tapanuli.<sup>18</sup> Another element may also be involved. Men who are successful in the rantau life as lawyers, civil servants or businessmen, may often fall flat on their faces in alok2 sessions because they do not know the esoteric adat phrases necessary to make a good oration. Thus for a short time, at least, the well-spoken village peasant can lord it over the urbanite,<sup>19</sup> upsetting the stratificatory hierarchy of modernizing, urban-centered Indonesia, often so damaging to the social position and social worth of Tapanuli rice farmers.

From the very start the importance of rantau concerns in our alok2 session was unmistakable. The raja panusunan bulung prefaced the session by thanking the host family for dinner with the following ditty:

. . . adong na deter,  
     adong na dotor,  
     adong na insinyur,  
     adong na jadi doktor,  
     anso adong pangiteanmunu . . .

There are sounds that go "deter,"  
 There are sounds that go "dotor";  
 May you have descendants who become engineers,  
 May you have descendants who become doctors,  
 So that there be a hardy bridge for you [to  
     enter the prosperous life too]

Concerns well beyond those of the Batak village were also evident in the frequent use of Arabic and Indonesian phrases in the ceremonial oratory. The raja panusunan bulung, for instance, ended this same initial speech by saying:

<sup>18</sup>See, for example, Mangaradja Goenoeng Sorik Marapi Nasution's *Turi-turian ni Radja Gorga di Langit dohot Radja Soeasa di Portibi* (Medan: Mimbar Medan, 1957).

<sup>19</sup>This is by no means always the case: some city-born Batak are excellent alok2 orators, schooled in the horja held in the rantau cities.

Jadi on pe da tapangido ma tu jolo ni Tuhan, parjolo hahorasan na dihita ditano on, pardomuan totop amal dohot iman, dilehen Tuhanta ma ( ) saulak on, botima, husulai dohot Assalam alaikum warohmatulohi wa barohkatuh!

(Alaikum salam)<sup>20</sup>

Well then indeed, we ask before God, firstly good health to us here on this earth, and may our coming-together and everyday relations be full of good deeds and good spiritual balance. May our God give us another such opportunity (to meet together) a bit further on, that then! I conclude with Peace be unto you and unto you Peace and God's Mercy, we assume the prayer stance.

("Peace be unto you," from the audience.)

Such an ending is entirely typical of Muslim adat orators in Sipirok.

Oji Baginda himself began his alok<sup>2</sup> speech with a rush of Arabic phrases, after first thanking the paralok-alok chanter in Batak. He used a number of Indonesian words as well, italicized here:

. . . Assalam alaikum alaikum na salam warohmatulohita allah baroh katuh!! (alaikum salam! from the audience). Bahat *puji* tu Tuhanta *yang markuasa* dohot salawat dan salam tu Nabinta Mohammed Sololohi wassalam na dung mangalehen sada ( ) dapat bertemu hita dibagasta on dohot *gembira* asa hami saluhutna mandok godang tarimo kasi dianak ni raja dianak ni na mora ima mauli bulung dibaen aha *maksud* dohot *tujuanna* tutu songon burangirname dison tarhadop rajanami tarhadop gurunami sian bona bulu, sian torbing balok asa sian desa na walu. . . .

Peace be unto you and unto you Peace and God's Mercy, we assume the prayer stance! (Peace be unto you). Much praise to our Almighty God and prayers and greetings to our Prophet Mohammed-May-the-Lord-Bless-Him-and-Give-Him-Peace who has given us an [opportunity] to meet together in our house here with joy and all of us say much thanks as well to the sons-of-raja sons-of-noblemen, the venerated adat nobility [gathered here]. What then is the reason and the aim here? Well, as our folded sirih says set out in front of our raja and our religious teacher from this stem-bamboo (home) village, in front of the raja from torbing balok, and from the Eight Domains, beyond the torbing balok. . . .

Similarly, the Oji's son used as much Arabic and Indonesian as his father to launch his own speech:

. . . taucapkon kepada Tuhan *yang markuasa* dan hita nada lupa mangucapkon salawat dan salam ke Nabinta Mohammed Sololohi wassalam na mangalehen *masa dan waktu* dihita *bersama* ( ) *disidang yang mulia* on, muse ima songon na dung dijojor ni ima amangnami ibana hami na sasusunan. . . .

. . . we say to Almighty God and neither do we forget to say prayers and greetings to our Prophet Mohammed-May-the-Lord-Bless-Him-and-Give-Him-Peace who has given us a period and a time for all of us together

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<sup>20</sup>This spelling follows the Batak pronunciation of the Arabic.

to meet in this glorious session here, moreover as has already been put forward by our father, he who speaks for all of us of-a-single-grouping. . . .

The Arabic prayer phrases place the adat speech within a wider frame of Islamic reference. They also serve to disarm, so to speak, the fairly frequent images of Batak ancestor figures used later in the speech. Indonesian phrases seem at first glance to be introduced when the topic of the oration deals with extra-Batak concerns.

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Oji Baginda's alok<sup>2</sup> speech was the first major one of the session and by far the longest.<sup>21</sup> After the Islamic opening phrases, he went on to relate the long series of family events over several generations that led to the construction of the tugu. As a young man, he was not yet able to undertake the tugu's construction:

. . . What should I say? We stomped upon the hard earth we searched the deep sky [for funds] but all our hopes could not yet be fulfilled . . . but Thanks be to Allah in the year 1974 when our younger lineage brother si Majid came home from Medan just exactly at the time of Idulfitri [and we] came back here so he could join in celebrating Hari Raya in our mother's house . . . and the house we stayed in over that Hari Raya was the house of our Ompu Parsadaan [our common grandfather] and we made the decision to refurbish his grave which had been the hope of our father for a long time though we had never seen our way clear to bring this about. . . .

Oji Baginda went on to say how the plan grew to include the repair of the grave of his father and the lineage ancestors twelve generations back:

. . . so our decision was made, our raja, in our house, so that all of us the three-of-a-single-father would repair the grave of our father. . . .

He then related the lineage-brothers' trip out to their grandfather's grave, and their direct conversation with his departed spirit:

. . . after we had repaired the grave, we asked, "O Ompung [grandparent], the Bestower-of-Luck! Do not stir angrily or hurl down curses because we have not come here for so long a time . . . [it is only that we have] been for so long a time in a moneyless condition."

Note that a devout Muslim here is reporting a direct conversation with ancestral spirits beyond the grave. In other sections of his various speeches in this horja, Oji Baginda made it clear that he considered the protection of his ancestral lineage spirits crucial to the

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<sup>21</sup>The raja panusunan bulung and his alok<sup>2</sup> chanter generally allow the host to run on for as long as he likes--"He's paying for it, after all," runs one explanation--but other speakers are sometimes asked to cut their speeches short. In fact, some longwinded speakers will make the formulaic comment far into their oration that "My words need not draw out much longer," and hear someone in the audience answer back, "They certainly needn't!"

continued good fortune and conspicuous financial success of his household. He apparently saw no need to defend his conversation with ancestral spirits against any objection that such talk might be "anti-Islam." This contrasts sharply with his quite defensive remarks about constructing the actual tugu (see below).

Oji Baginda went on to describe his dealings with the subprovincial government as he went about securing building permits for the tugu. At considerable length, he detailed how he went from office to office, collecting official stamp after official stamp. Now, most knowledgeable and traditional alok2 orators work with a vocabulary of courtly old adat metaphors and proverbs, not in terms of civil servants, official stamps, and government offices. That Oji Baginda's speech was matter-of-factly accepted by the assembled raja is evidence of the considerable leeway in choice of topic and terminology that alok2 orators have today.

Yet his comments on government matters were deftly combined with Arabic prayer phrases and hoary adat proverbs, in a pleasingly fast-paced speech that seemed to impress and entertain his audience despite its unusual length.

#### b. Tugu Dedication Speeches

In his speech at the tugu site, Oji Baginda went back over much of the same family history leading up to the construction of the monument. He described its immense proportions proudly--twelve meters, one for each generation since the ancestor--and explained the symbolism of the jaunty *papier mâché* bush planted firmly at its peak (as well he might, since foliage does not usually adorn Batak tugu). The shiny green bush, he said, was of the species found in profusion near the village the ancestor founded and from which the village got its name. Much of the speech was spent on eulogies of the government officials in attendance, but the most interesting section was his defense of the tugu as fundamentally in accord with Islam. He said:

. . . There are people who say, as when I first constructed this, "Oh, just erect a simple grave marker over there," they would say. However, I say that whosoever has gone to Mecca and who has not seen the tugu of Nabi Adam . . . now, don't you be fooled, that person just is not a haji. Oji Baginda Makmur from Huta Dolok says, I am responsible in this matter, this tugu does not partake of the notions of those-who-have-not-yet-received-true-religion. This is what I say: this is cement, this is stone, there is nothing here but sand and stone, so why should folks say that this resembles things made by infidels?! So, here, let us believe in this commemoration. Even in Mecca, there are such commemorations: on the way in to Mecca there are tugu, [on the way out?] there are tugu! So all of this, we made the top [of the tugu] like it is [with the little bush] because that's all the way it is in history, with all the generations there. . . .

Oji Baginda went on to say that he hoped his descendants would be able to improve upon even this superb series of funeral monuments. Speeches by the raja panusunan bulung and various raja, and representatives of the South Tapanuli DPR followed, each praising the tugu

building endeavor. Invariably, the government officials linked tugu building to national development, quite a feat of syncretism in itself. Only Oji Baginda dwelt on the possibility that the tugu might be construed as idolatrous.

His behavior throughout the ceremony reflected this same pattern of reconciling adat to Islam without consciously compromising either. As a haji, he could not participate in the ritual *tortor* dances at his own horja--surely a blow, since he assured me he had been a fine *tortor* dancer in his pre-haji days. The ceremonial events of the three days were carefully dovetailed with the five daily prayers of Islam, and special rooms were set aside as men's and women's prayer sites.<sup>22</sup>

In his insistence that the grander ceremonial events of the adat need not be in conflict with Islam, Oji Baginda is in agreement with many local haji. Like most village religious teachers, haji view *tortor* dancing as dangerous trafficking with spirits. However, many defend their participation in the yearly round of adat weddings, bride-price sessions, house-enterings, "soul-recapture" ceremonies, and so on as actions that simply serve to strengthen good community order. For them, the adat is being vigorously redefined as a moral system, something sanctioned, if not set up, by Allah as a laudable set of customs that fosters village peace and productivity.

### Conclusions

The Minangkabau to the south of the Sipirok Batak have a characteristically perceptive saying on the question of adat and social change: "When the flood comes, the bathing place moves," or, as social conditions change, adat adjusts. As will be obvious from these few glimpses of Sipirok ceremonial speech, Batak adat today is a similarly adjustable cultural system. We have examined the elasticity of Sipirok adat in two major domains: adat's developing synthesis with Islam, and, less to the fore in the quoted speeches but equally important in Sipirok adat as a whole, adat's ongoing accommodation to the incontrovertible facts of a national political presence in this rural Sumatran province.

The spirit world of Sipirok evidently is becoming relativized within a larger world of Muslim spirit figures and moral teaching. At the same time, Sipirok adat has lost much of its effective political base. No longer the exclusive driving force behind village cohesion and area cooperation, the political aspects of the adat have nevertheless reemerged as a rather theatrical symbolic system played out in periodic adat ceremonies. Raja have turned into raja adat. Lineage disputes still thrive, but are as likely to be based on rantau-born rivalries as on home-village concerns.

Adat oratory, far from being the hidebound system that such rubrics as "ritual adat speech" might suggest, is actually at the growing tip of Batak culture today. Adat oratory of the sort sampled here is rapidly becoming a major means whereby homeland and rantau

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<sup>22</sup>Pork of course was not used; though pigs are the central ritual animal in Toba Batak adat, they are not raised in the Muslim south by either Muslims or Christians.

Batak redefine their adat world in its present national and Muslim environs. Paradoxically perhaps, adat oratory should therefore be a major focus of modernization research in Indonesia today.



Plate 6



Plate 7

#### Speech-making sessions

Formal speech-giving sessions punctuate the horja ceremony at frequent intervals. In Sipirok various verbal duels between kin factions take place in the yard of the host's house or at the village bathing pool. Delegations of rajas from neighboring villages are also greeted with outdoor speech-making sessions in the front-courtyard or at the edge of the village.