

Modernity of the Bataknese in Tapanuli during the Dutch Colonial and Japanese Occupation Period

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Abstract: This paper examines the modernity of the Batak people during the Dutch colonial period and Japanese occupation. The data utilized were derived from both oral and written sources, and a historical research methodology was employed, comprising source collection, source criticism, interpretation, and explanation. The focus of this study revolves around the evolution of Batak modernity, initiated through the introduction of Western education by the colonial administration and missionary endeavors commencing in the mid-19th century. This educational trend persisted during the ethical policy era of the 20th century, bringing modernity into the lives of the Batak people. Stereotypes depicting the Batak as an uncivilized and cannibalistic ethnic group gradually diminished with the increasing number of educated Batak individuals. During the Dutch colonial period, the Batak people had already formed a modern elite group that embraced Dutch colonial modernity. However, the modernity of this Batak elite was characterized by ambiguity, as they simultaneously became part of modernity while preserving Batak characteristics and traditions. In 1942, when Japan took over Tapanuli, the Batak people became more involved in practical politics with the Japanese. This phase was marked by a heightened interest among the Batak people in joining the military. The military education provided by the Japanese was effectively utilized by the Batak people, resulting in the emergence of Batak military leaders in Tapanuli. Therefore, it can be concluded that education served as the pathway for the Batak people to embrace modernity and attain positions of power.

Abstrak: Paper ini mengkaji tentang modernitas orang-orang Batak pada masa Kolonial Belanda dan Pendudukan Jepang. Data-data yang digunakan dalam tulisan ini diperoleh dari sumber lisan dan tulisan melalui penelitian sejarah. Adapun metode yang digunakan adalah metode sejarah yang terdiri dari pengumpulan sumber, kritik sumber, interpretasi dan eksplanasi. Modernitas orang Batak yang menjadi objek dalam penelitian ini berawal dari diperkenalkannya pendidikan barat oleh pemerintah kolonial dan zending sejak pertengahan abad ke-19. Pendidikan ini terus berkembang pada masa politik etis di abad ke-20 yang menghadirkan modernitas dalam kehidupan orang-orang Batak. Stereotipe tentang orang Batak sebagai kelompok etnis yang tidak beradab dan kanibal lambat laun mulai menghilang dengan meningkatnya jumlah orang Batak yang berpendidikan. Pada masa kolonial Belanda, orang-orang Batak telah menciptakan kelompok elit modern yang mengadopsi modernitas kolonial Belanda. Namun, modernitas elit modern Batak bersifat ambigu. Di satu sisi mereka menjadi bagian dari modernitas tetapi di sisi lain mereka masih memelihara karakteristik dan tradisi Batak. Pada tahun 1942, saat Jepang mengambil alih Tapanuli, orang-orang Batak lebih banyak terlibat dalam politik praktis dengan Jepang. Fase ini ditandai dengan meningkatnya minat orang Batak untuk bergabung di militer. Pendidikan militer disediakan Jepang dimanfaatkan dengan baik oleh orang Batak. Pendidikan ini menghasilkan pemimpin-pemimpin militer orang Batak di Tapanuli. Dengan demikian dapat disimpulkan bahwa pendidikan menjadi jalan bagi orang Batak untuk menjadi modern dan memperoleh kekuasaan.

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INTRODUCTION

The Batak ethnic group constitutes one of the ethnic communities in Indonesia, predominantly inhabiting a significant portion of the North Sumatra Province, particularly in the hinterlands of Tapanuli. The Batak ethnic group played a pivotal role in the formation of the unitary state of Indonesia from the early stages of the national movement in the early 20th century. Educated members of the Batak community, affiliated with the Jong Batak, actively voiced the unity of the Indonesian nation in confronting Dutch colonialism (Reid, 2011, p. 32). Before the 19th century, the Batakese were an ethnic group that was backward and marginalized. They inhabited the valleys of inland Tapanuli around Toba Lake. Although it cannot be said that they were isolated, the Batak people in the pre-colonial period represented an ancient society that was homogeneous in both political and socio-cultural life (Castles, 2001). In addition, the Batak people were often portrayed in Dutch colonial sources as ethnic groups who were not civilized and not religious. This is because people were still going through the rituals that were cannibalized and embraced traditional or religious beliefs called *Pelbegu* (Perret, 2010, p. 56).

Early sources that provided the idea of cannibalism of Batak ethnic had provided the label and ethnic stereotypes that were attached to the ethnic Batak. In the 18th century, Marsden explained that cannibalism was found in the Batak, but the practice was not aimed at satisfying hunger but as a penalty against crime. That tradition was a part of the belief ceremony which showed their hatred toward certain crimes and was a way to get revenge against their enemies. In general, people who became victims were prisoners of war, those who died in the war, and the defendants facing the death penalty (Marsden, 2008, p. 356). Cannibalism was only done by people in the suburb Batak Tapanuli, which still adheres to the *Pelbegu* religion (pagan), while the Batak people who have converted to Islam and moved to the coast no longer perform this tradition (Drakard, 1982, p. 75).

In the second decade of the 19th century, when Europeans began to come in direct contact with the people in the interior Batak, stereotypes about ethnic Batak as an uncivilized and cannibalist ethnic group remained. This impression strongly affected two English missionaries, Burton and Ward, who entered rural Toba of Sibolga in 1824. They tried to prove the truth of these stereotypes and looked forward to seeing the direct practice (Burton & Ward, 2010, p. 221).

Some literature on Batak in the mid-19th century and the 20th century showed the same trend. Junghuhn, in 1847, described in detail the practice of cannibalism among the Batakese. The explanation was not much different from that of Marsden who believed that cannibalism committed by the Batak people was only a form of punishment. Nonetheless, Junghuhn's description of the cannibalism of the Batak people seems excessive (Junghuhn, 1847).

In 1909, H.W. Fischer in *Neerlandia* magazine even included a caricature of Batak cannibalism. This caricature was composed of three parts: in the first, the Batak killed his opponent. In the second part, the victim's head was cut and stored, then in the third part, the pieces of the body other than the head were enjoyed one by one by the Batak (Fischer, 1909). In 1926-1927, Edwin M. Loeb also discussed Batak cannibalism. Still, his opinion was not a result of direct observation; it was sourced from Junghuhn's article published in 1847, so it did not describe the phenomenon that occurred in the 20th century (Loeb, 2013). In 1936, J. Tideman posited that Batak cannibalism seemed to have become rare. It was possible that the Batak people no longer practiced cannibalism after they embraced Islam and Christianity (Tideman, 1936, p. 6).

According to Castles, negative stereotypes about the Batak also affected the policy of the Dutch government in the 19th century. The Dutch government preferred the word Tapanuli to name its new residency in the Gulf of Tapanuli to Bataklanden. In the Batak language, the word comes from the term *Tapian Na Uli*, which means a beautiful edge, so the name Tapanuli, which was initially only for coastal regions of Tapanuli, is also used for the entire Land of Batak in the interior (Castles, 2001). Negative stereotypes about the Batak people seem deliberately exaggerated display and by the Dutch. The goal was to accentuate the Netherlands' achievement in advancing the Batak people. At the beginning of the 20th century, several Dutch government policies were made to encourage the people of Batak to get out of the stereotypes.

In the 1930s, the Batak ethnic group emerged as the most advanced group in Tapanuli. Most educated workers in Tapanuli were Batakese. This lasted until the arrival of the Japanese period in 1942. In this transition period, the Japanese government continued the Dutch efforts to improve the Batak people, which led to the growth of Batak's modern elites and a strengthened Batak identity. This paper tries to explain the modernity of the Batak people in the Dutch and Japanese colonial peri-

ods, particularly concerning policies carried out by the Dutch and Japan in promoting the Batak people and the Batak people's response to modernity introduced by the Dutch and Japan.

Historians and anthropologists have conducted extensive studies on the Batak ethnic group. Reid (2006), in his work titled "Is There a Batak History?", delves into the Batak ethnic group, considering it a demographic entity that lacks a comprehensive historical account. According to Reid, the historiography of the Batak is constrained by limited and subjective sources. He posits the necessity for further research on Batak history with a focused exploration of the characteristics of the Batak ethnicity, notably as a stateless community. Reid's observations appear to constitute a critique of the historical narratives produced by certain Batak individuals attempting to document their history, as exemplified by Mangaradja Palindungan (1965) in his work "Tuanku Rao."

Reid's perspective aligns with Castles (2001), who views the Batak as an ethnic group without a distinct state. In his book "Political Life in a Residency in Sumatra: Tapanuli 1815-1940," Castles elucidates that the Batak people are free and geographically isolated. Castles' writings provide insights into the significant influence exerted by the Dutch, both the colonial government and missionaries, on Batak's political life. The Dutch presence contributed to the shaping of Batak ethnic identity and the strengthening of ideas of Batak ethnic unity. Initially, this process did not threaten the Dutch; however, sustained pressure exerted by the Dutch government on the Batak people in Tapanuli eventually led to political movements.

Castles further discusses how the advancements introduced by the Dutch transformed the Batak people, primarily in aspects related to their political life. The Dutch colonial dominance over Batak's political life was substantial, yet the Batak people were not merely passive objects but also active subjects. Daniel Perret's study (2010) highlights that the Batak people continuously shaped their identity in response to colonialism. Additionally, interactions with other ethnic groups, such as the Malay, served as catalysts for the Batak people's transition from a marginalized ethnic group to one that is progressive and dominant.

METHOD

This research applied the historical method of collecting, verifying, interpreting, and analyzing the references as the data about the formation of ethnic identity in North Sumatra. The data were collected

by field research, interview, and library research. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted by using historical and anthropological approaches. Then, these data were arranged chronologically and contextually to be analyzed through modernity theory.

Modernity can be understood as new ideas about movement and changes experienced as a form of progress. With modernity, past institutions and attitudes that were left behind became a tradition, so it can be said that modernity was created (Nordholt, 2002, p. 215). When the Dutch government began introducing modernity to the life of the Batakese, this ethnic group adopted the concept of modernity or progress in their local language, namely *Amazon*. This reflected the Batakese awareness of the meaning of modernity in their lives. This value is closely related to the value of the Batak culture, namely *hamoraon* (wealth) and *hara-jaon* (power). The *hamajuon* value is the basis for gaining wealth and power (Vergouwen, 2004).

THE BATAKNESE

Based on the population composition made by Couperus in 1855, Batakese was the biggest ethnic in Tapanuli, thus it can be said that Tapanuli was the Batak region (Couperus, 1855, p. 234). This opinion resonates with Gusti Asnan, who predicts that until the end of the 19th century, Tapanuli was inhabited by 80% Batakese, and the rest were people of Minangkabau, Aceh, and Nias. The Minangkabau people were the second largest ethnic group after Batak (Asnan, 2007, p. 38).

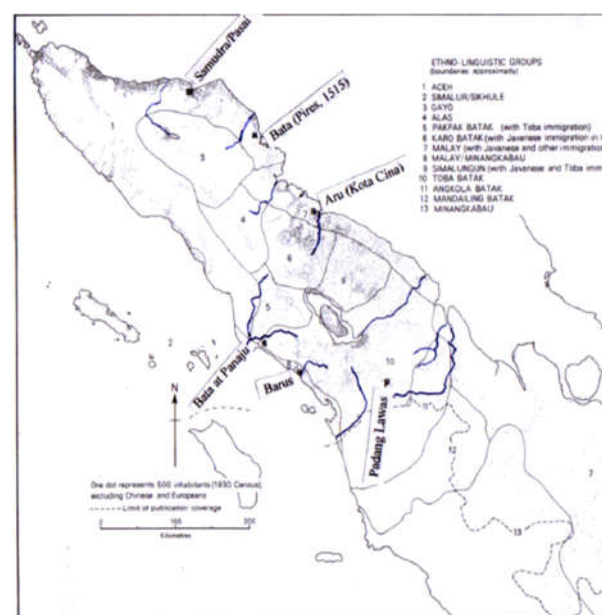


Figure 1. Ethnic Map of Tapanuli (Reid (2006, p.10)

Table 1. Ethnic Composition in Tapanuli, year 1851-1900

Ethnic group	1851	1880	1900
Batak	59.526	147.500	257.000
Minangkabau	11.905	29.500	51.400
Aceh & Nias	2.976	7.376	12.850

Sources: adapted from Asnan (2007, p. 38) and Couperus (1855, p. 234).

The formation of Tapanuli as Batak world cannot be separated from the migration process of the Bataknese region of origin in the interior Toba. Based on genealogical research on ethnic Batak, it was depicted that Bataknese is a descendant of King Batak originating from Pusuk Buhit mountain to the west of Lake Toba, as proposed by Vergouwen:

According to the Batak people, they all come from the King Batak. According to legend, he is the descendant of the gods (*dewata*). His mother, Si Borudeakparudjar, was ordered by the Dewata Tinggi (Debata Muladjadi Nabolon), to create the Earth. After doing so, he went to Siandjumulamula and settled there. This village was where the King Batak dwelled, on the slopes of Pusuk Buhit mountain. The Batak Toba people regard the place as where the entire nation of Batak derived (Vergouwen, 2004, p. 7).

Up until today, no evidence can argue against the argument that the origin of Batak ethnic was from the Toba area. Castles (2001, p. 3), Perret (2010), and Reid (2009) showed consistently that migration of Batak people had occurred from around the Toba Lake to the area known today as Tapanuli. It is estimated that the migration of people of Batak from their original started in the 8th century when Batak began to be involved in trade on the west and east coasts of Sumatra (Andaya, 2002, p. 389; Tideman, 1936).

Many researchers assume that the migration process has led to the fragmentation of the Batak ethnic group into several ethnic subgroups. However, in categorizing Batak ethnic subgroups, there are differences in the investigators' view on the number of ethnic subgroups that were formed. Some researchers divided the groups by dialect, as Joustra (1926) divides the ethnic Batak into six subgroups, namely, Batak Karo, Batak Pakpak, Batak Toba, Batak Angkola, Batak Mandailing, and Batak Timur or Simalungun (Loeb, 2013, p. 20). Further, the Batak ethnic division was no longer based on the dialect but on the geographical boundaries and differences in customs (culture). Castles divide Batak

ethnic into five ethnic subgroups, namely Batak Toba, Batak Karo, Batak Simalungun, Batak Pakpak Dairi, and Angkola-Mandailing. He considers Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola can be grouped into one ethnic subgroup because both are located in the south Tapanuli and have nearly the same customs (Castles, 2001).

WESTERN EDUCATION AND MODERNITY

Since Queen Wilhelmina set Ethical Policy in 1901, which included irrigation, education, and transmigration, Western education introduced by the Dutch among natives no longer merely aimed to overcome short-staffed European bureaucracy but was also driven by the slogan of the Dutch for the promotion and welfare of the indigenous population (Vickers, 2009). As a result, western education can be enjoyed by the nobility and ordinary people. Dutch ethical policy gradually blurred the status distinctions based on birth and became a guide to the indigenous population in the modern world (Legge, 1993, p. 30; Vickers, 2009, p. 26).

In their effort to introduce Western education among natives in Tapanuli, including Barus and Sibolga, the Dutch government had its strategy. They harnessed the missionaries (sending) to open schools so they did not have to build schools and bring teachers. The *Zending* had begun building the school before the Dutch government pursued ethical politics. *Zending* schools were first established by G. van Asselt in Sipirok (South Tapanuli) in 1857 and 1864 Silindung by Ludwig Igwer Nommensen. In general, schools established by the sending were built in conjunction with the establishment of the church. When the Dutch government began building a government school with a limited number of students, the existing *zending* schools were subsidized by the requirement to have as many as 30 students (Harahap, 1960, p. 68).

In the context of the expansion of education among the indigenous population, it was the common impression that the Dutch government made use of the *zending*, but in the context of Christianity, the *zending* were the ones to take advantage of assistance from the Dutch to extend the mission area. This is because, since the onset of World War I (1914-1918), the *zending* who came from Germany experienced financial problems since the German government stopped its aid. The ambitious plan of the *zending* to establish schools and churches throughout Tapanuli would not be possible without the abundant help of the Dutch colonial government. Each school received assistance from the Dutch government for f.80.000, which allowed

Zending to establish and maintain schools properly and hire teachers (Pedersen, 1975).

The Dutch policy of establishing schools that relied more on *zending* caused *zending* schools in Tapanuli to achieve remarkable development. Since 1887 the numbers have been even larger than the government schools, where there were 63 *zending* schools, but there were only 19 government schools (Table. 2). The establishment of *zending* schools was initially intended to convert the Batak people, but in the subsequent development of the schools, they were able to produce educated Christian Batakese. It is also why, at the end of the 19th century, the coastal population of Tapanuli, mostly Muslim, was not interested in entering Western education as Western schools were synonymous with Christianity. According to Graves, the disinterest of the coastal population in Western education was also due to their not considering education important. Western education did not become their urge for social economy mobilization, as their economic activity was in maritime and trade. In addition, the kings did not necessarily have to go through education to be appointed king (Graves, 2007, pp. 193-194). Only after they realized that Western education became a prerequisite for working in a modern colonial bureaucracy did much of the coastal population begin to be attracted to modern schools.

The increasing native population's interest in Western education encouraged the Dutch to establish the Netherlands School for Bumiputera (*Hollandsch Inlandsche School* - HIS) in 1914. Graduates of these schools can continue their education to higher primary school at *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO), which prepares graduates of HIS to enter middle school. Usually, MULO graduates continue their education at secondary school (*the General Middelbare School* - AMS). The school period of AMS and MULO was three years. There were two types of AMS: AMS (A), which taught classic literature in addition to modern languages, history, and geography, as they cover secondary education, and AMS (B), which taught mathematics and science (Legge, 1993, p. 31). The *zending* also preceded the Dutch move to establish HIS Indies. In 1911, the *zending* built HIS in Bataklanden (Castles, 2001, p. 110), while the Dutch government only built HIS in Sibolga, the capital of Tapanuli residency, in 1920. This government-owned HIS had limited capacity, so a lot of the indigenous population, particularly those derived from the common people, could not get into this school. At the beginning of establishing a government-owned HIS, everyone could be an HIS stu-

dent if the parents could afford it. Since the number of students increased significantly, only certain groups were able to register, such as children of the Commission, the Chief Teacher, the Assistant Head of District (Demang), the Head of District (Demang), the prosecutor, and the head of the *Kuria* (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1926b).

In 1921, the limited number of HIS in Tapanuli encouraged the educated Batakese such as Abdul Rashid, Sutan Gunung Mulia, and Sutan Kumala Moon to establish the Batak Study Fund or Batak Studie Fonds (Castles, 2001, p. 139). This institution founded private HIS in Sibolga. The inhabitants of Sibolga did not too enthuse HIS, founded by Bataksche Studie Fonds, because the tuition fee was more expensive and the studying period was shorter compared to government HIS. In 1929, Bataksche Studie Fonds HIS experienced financial problems. The lack of savings and income from tuition fees prevented the board from hiring teachers. In 1932, Bataksche Studie Fonds had to sell the school to *Zending*, and since then, the private HIS has been renamed Christelijke HIS. At the same time, the Dutch government built Hollandsch Chinese School in Sibolga. This school used the Chinese language and was provided specifically for the Chinese in Tapanuli (*Pertjatoeran*, 1931; Soeara Tapanoeli, 1926b).

In 1925, the *zending* planned to establish the Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs or MULO for the Balige of Tapanuli in Bataklanden. The *zending* initiative was warmly welcomed by the residents of Tapanuli. But then came the debate on the location of the MULO. People in coastal Tapanuli argued that MULO should be built in Sibolga, not in Bataklanden (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1925b). Compared with Balige, Sibolga was more populated and was the center of government in Tapanuli, as reported by Soeara Tapanoeli:

Sebab Sibolga ada mendjadi centrum gewest kita dan dialah jang teramai di Tapanoeli ini, disinilah jang sepantasnja didirikan MULO itoe, dari tempat mana tidak terlaloe salah kalau dikata sama djaoehnja ke afdeeling2 Bataklanden, P. Sidempoean dan Nias (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1925b).

Sibolga is the center that became our greatest, and it was the busiest in Tapanoeli, so MULO should be established here; it can be said that this place is not as far as the Bataklanden, P. Sidempoean, and Nias sections (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1925b).

The debate about the MULO's location in Tapanuli was caused not only by a geographical factor but also by the religious differences among

Table 2. Number of Schools and Students in *Zending* and Government Schools in Tapanuli Residence

Year	<i>Zending</i>		Government	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
1870	10	200	14	634
1880	37	995	-	?
1887	63	1.365	19	1.204
1892	116	4.097	18	1.534
1897	172	6.585	18	2.559
1904	298	14.519	19	2.555
1910	494	27.485	21	3.074
1920	509	24.629	31	?
1928	443	29.927	102	5.132
1936	585	43.184	159	13.635

Sources: Purba & Purba (1997, p. 67).

the residents of Tapanuli. Although the relationship between the people of Islam and Christians in Tapanuli looked fine, in certain limits, religious differences divided the inter-group interaction, especially between Christian Bataknese in inland Tapanuli and the coastal Muslims in the coastal Tapanuli. The coastal residents were reluctant to send their children to school in the Balige area, with the majority being Christian. The negative view of the Moslems towards the Christian Bataknese seemed to be the reason. The Christian Bataknese had different characteristics from the Bataknese who migrated to the Coast. The excessive ethnocentrism attitude of the Christian Bataknese in Balige would make it difficult for Muslims to attend MULO. On the other hand, it would be better for Christian Bataknese from Bataklanden if MULO was established in Sibolga because a large number of people of their ethnicity and religion had been living in this city (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1925b).

The great aspiration of the Sibolga residents on MULO to be established there can be seen from the formation of the founding committee whose members consisted of individuals from various ethnic groups in Sibolga, namely Sutan Pamenan, director of Soeara Tapanoeli, Gok Kai Eng of the Chinese, Mas Supomo, Lucius of Hatopan Christian Batak (HKB), Abdur Rahman, a teacher in HIS Sibolga, and Haloedin, leader of the Sarikat Islam in Sibolga. In 1933, MULO was finally established in Tapanuli, not in Sibolga nor Balige as planned earlier, but in Tarutung. This raised the disappointment of Sarikat Islam, and they sent a letter of protest to the Governor General in Bogor. The protest did not seem to get a response because, until the end of the

colonial period, MULO still stood in Tarutung (Bergerak, 1933; Soeara Tapanoeli, 1926a).

In the early 20th century, western education had raised modern elite groups in Tapanuli. They were the educated Bataknese who enjoyed important positions in the bureaucracy of modern colonials like Demang and Assistant Demang (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1927a). The Kings of coastal Tapanuli considered their presence a threat to their political position. This is because the position of customary law expert and assistant village headman was higher than that of the King, whose power had been encroached upon by the Dutch Colonial (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1927a).

With the enactment of the Demang system in Tapanuli, the power of Kings in the coastal Tapanuli gradually decreased. Previously, at the end of the 19th century, kings in the coastal Tapanuli had their power reduced and influenced when their status was changed to Head Kuria and they got paid by the Dutch Colonial government. They were assigned to collect taxes from the residents. In 1914, Frijling, an advisor of government affairs for provinces outside, even suggested removing the Head Kuria position because Demang could replace this post. However, Barth, a Resident of Tapanuli, rejected this proposal and argued that the government still needed Head Kuria to double the tax. Therefore, the position of the Head Kuria was still maintained, but the Dutch government no longer paid them. The Head Kuria hired before 1916 acquired a salary from the government from f.50 up to f.80, while those raised after 1916 did not acquire a salary from the government, but the Kuria saving from f.50 up to f.110. The salary was calculated based on its population (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1927a).

The old elite group, who used to be the kings of the coastal, considered that Demang's presence had weakened their position. As reported in the newspapers *Soeara Tapanoeli* in 1927.

Bahwa lemahnja kedoedoekan kepala-kepala Koeria adalah oleh karena mereka itoe dibawah perintah Demang. Demang jang tiada berketeroenan bangsawan. Anak negeri jang melihat Radjanja diperintah oleh orang-orang jang tidak bangsawan, mereka, rajat tadi, djadi koerang perindahannja kepada Radjanja sendiri. Oleh karena itoe, Koeria Bond pihak jang pertama tadi meminta, soepaja Demang-Demang itoe terdiri dari orang-orang jang berasal dari bangsawan (Soeara Tapanoeli, 1927b).

The weak position of the heads of Kuria was because of their subordinate position under the Demang. Demang who were no royal descendants. The people who see their Kings being ordered by commoners would

lose their respect for their own King. That is why *Kuria* of the former party demands that Demang be selected from the royal families (*Soeara Tapanoeli*, 1927b).

The emergence of the Batak people as a new elite in the colonial bureaucracy made the old elite realize that education was a tool to gain power. This then pushed a coastal king from Barus to send his children to Western schools. One of them was Sultan Syahi Alam. He sent his children to prestigious schools founded by the Dutch, like MULO in Medan and Cultuur School in Sukabumi. In 1925, one of the children named Sutan Abdul Rauf became an Assistant Demang in Sibolga (Harahap, 2012, p. 256).

In the 1930s, the life of modern Batak elites in Tapanuli was paradoxical and ambiguous. On the one hand, they became a part of modernity, speaking Dutch, dressing modern, and occupying European-style houses; on the other hand, they still tried to reproduce the old Customs as a symbol of power. When invited to the traditional ceremonies, the modern Batak elites wanted to be treated like royals. They considered their positions similar to those of the descendants of kings so that they should be treated with the same nobility. This raised debate in local newspapers, where there were allegations from royalty groups that since the employees hired by the Dutch were not of a class of royalty, customs were destroyed in the coastal Tapanuli. This is different from the depiction by Pramoedya of the figure Minke in Java in one of his novels. He wanted to let go of his royal symbols when entering the modern world (Toer, 1980).

In addition to being ambiguous, colonial modernity was also discriminatory. Obtaining Western education, speaking in Dutch, and dressing like Europe did not make indigenous people positioned equally to the Dutch. Ilyas Dalimunthe, an editor in the newspaper *Pertjatoeran Huff*, was offended by the attitude of the Dutch, who did not appreciate him. However, he was educated and dressed like the Europeans (*Soeara Tapanoeli*, 1925a).

MODERNITY IN THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION PERIOD: MILITARY AND GOVERNMENTAL EDUCATION

In Tapanuli, the beginning of the Japanese occupation period became the transition from order to chaos. The citizens experienced the euphoria of liberty from Dutch colonialism. The Dutch houses were looted, and the citizens attacked the warehouses of Dutch companies like Guntzel & Schumacher dan Borsumij. The Japanese dealt with the chaotic situation with the help of the old elite, namely the descendants and Kings of coastal Ta-



Figure 2. Office of *Borsumij* in Sibolga. (KITLV No. 400062)

panuli (Panggabean, 1995, p. 73).

In addition to using the old leader from the royal family, the Japanese government was also aided by the new elite from the educated Batakese. This is because the Japanese government encountered the same issue as the Dutch for the first time in building power in Tapanuli. They had limited employees and soldiers to control the chaotic situation in the colonies. Therefore, cooperation with local leaders was the most effective and efficient method. Japanese soldiers overcame the shortcomings by providing opportunities for young people from the common citizens to sign in military schools they founded. Japan's policy that tried to accommodate all factions within the community raised the confidence that the Japanese came as liberators. Educated groups in Indonesia accepted the presence of Japan with a sense of joy because they improved Indonesia's socioeconomic status. They no longer experienced the bitterness of the Dutch policy of ethnic discrimination. Japan had given them a position as a nation and masters in their own country. Moreover, the Dutch and people suspected of being pro-Dutch were imprisoned in concentration camps (Kahin, 2013, p. 146). Activists in Sibolga were also optimistic that the arrival of the Japanese Army was completely to release the people of Indonesia from the Dutch. They welcomed Japan's arrival by flying the Indonesian red and white flag. It was not forbidden by the Japanese to ingratiate the people of Indonesia (Panggabean, 1995, p. 73). In the Dutch period, flying the flag and singing the song 'Indonesia Raya' were two important things prohibited to the people of Indonesia.

The Japanese presence in Indonesia in 1942 further strengthened the position of the Batakese as a modern elite group. The scarcity of skilled and educated workers in this new era allowed educated

Batakese to hold important positions in the government in Tapanuli. They were the ethnic group in Tapanuli which had the most educated workers. No one could match the Batakese in Tapanuli in terms of the desire for education. For them, education was the way to make progress and gain power. In the pre-colonial period, the Batakese deliberately migrated to build *harajaon* (power) in the form of *Huta* (village) in suburban areas, such as in the suburbs of Sibolga so came the names of villages that started with 'huta'. After the colonial period and independence, land constraints did not allow the Batakese to establish *huta*. The Introduction of Batak Toba people with *zending* provided new insights that *harajaon* can be gained through education, as the experience of Ferdinand Lumban Tobing, who was able to build his *harajaon* through education.

Ferdinand Lumban Tobing was of Batak ethnic descent and had migrated from Silindung (Inland Batak Toba) to Sibolga. He was born in 1899, and his father, Raja Guru Herman Lumban Tobing, was a school teacher in the zending school in the village Sibuluan Sibolga. A strong desire to get F.L.Tobing into higher education prompted him to hand over his son to a Dutch pastor at a time when F.L. Tobing was still five years old Tobias and his birth as the son was expected by Guru Herman (Tobing, 1997, p. 27).

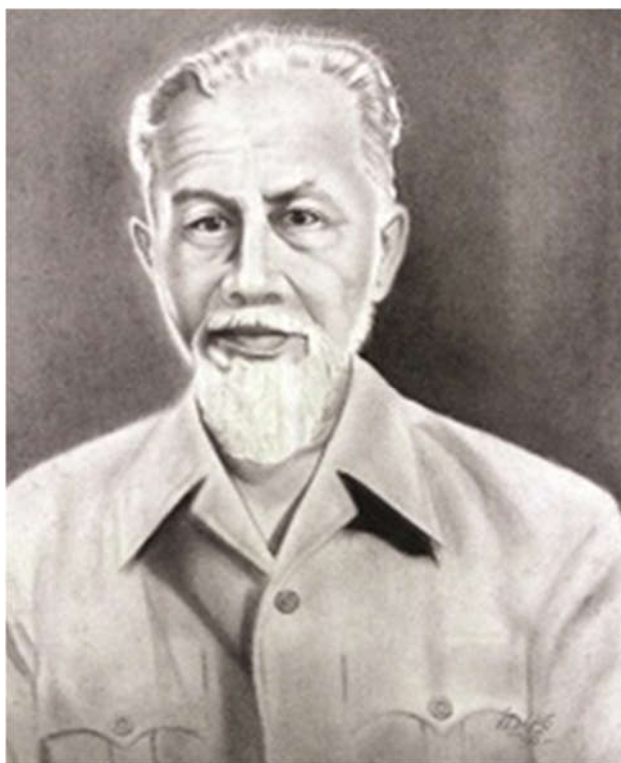


Figure 3. Ferdinand Lumban Tobing. (<https://sumutprov.go.id/>)

In Batak patrilineal society, the position of a son is very important because the son is considered the clan's successor (Vergouwen, 2004). This illustrates how the Batak people are willing to sacrifice anything to keep their children getting an education, even if the children must be separated from them. Guru Herman was confident that with his hand over to a Dutch pastor who settled on Java (Depok), F.L. Tobing would get a better education than if he had stayed with his parents in Sibolga, Tapanuli. In the shadow of Indonesia, most people at the time, Java was the center of progress, where people hung their hopes to obtain a higher level of education. Guru Herman should not feel worried about losing their children because foster parents Tobias did not change his name and surname, so the identity of Ferdinand Lumban Tobing would not be lost. He still would have a genealogical and emotional attachment to his parents, clans, and native land (Tobing, 1997, p. 27).

This genealogical bond was what, in the end, brought Ferdinand Lumban Tobing back to Tapanuli. After completing his specialist education, he was placed by the Dutch government in his area of origin in Sibolga, Tapanuli, in 1937. he was assigned to General Hospital Sibolga. F. L. Tobing's position as head of general hospital Sibolga showed that he had obtained power through education. His profession as a doctor had placed him in a respectable position in society. His children attended *Europesche Lagere School* (ELS), an elite and exclusive school for Dutch children, which educated the Dutch-speaking parts of society. People Tapanuli deeply honored and appreciated it (Tobing, 1997, p. 43).

During the Japanese occupation, F.L. Tobing was recognized by the Japanese and the community as a public figure in Tapanuli. When Japan began losing ground in the Pacific War, they began to form the Advisory Council (*Syu Sangi Kai*), coming from some community leaders. F.L. Tobing was elected as one of the members of the Sangi Kai, while its chairman was Mangaradja Parlindungan. The task of the Advisory Board was to answer the Japanese questions about social issues and exertion *romusha*. However, the council tried to fight for the people's interests wisely and undercover. When he became a member of Sangi Kai, F.L. Tobing left his profession as a doctor. He was later appointed as the chairman of Syu Sangi Kai, replacing Mangaradja Palindungan. In 1944, F.L. Tobing's political position in Tapanuli strengthened, with the Japanese giving him a position as Fuku Chokan or Deputy Resident of Tapanuli (Tobing, 1997, pp. 53-

54).

It could not be known with certainty F. L. Tobing's motive to engage in politics and leave his profession as a doctor. Nevertheless, when seen from its cultural value as a Batakese, F.L. Tobias began to build his *harajaon* (power) over the various ethnic groups in Sibolga and Tapanuli. Like Afif Lumban Tobing described as follows:

His respectable position in the Japanese government, supported by his nature of bravery and honesty, had pushed him to become a leader of a nation that was honored and respected, both by the Japanese themselves and the leaders of the community and the people of Tapanuli. His leadership was accepted by the whole society regardless of sub-ethnic and religion (Tobing, 1997, p. 54).

Beside F.L. Tobing, another figure appeared: Maraden Panggabean, a general who started his career as a teacher at the School of the Christian Batak (HKB) in Sibolga, Tapanuli, in 1940. Maraden Panggabean came from the interior of Kampung Batak Hutatoruan, State Pansurnapitu Valley Silindung, seven kilometers from the town of Tarutung. His parents later moved to Sibolga after his father quit as head of State in Sigompulon. According to Maraden Panggabean, his father, Marhusa Panggabean, titled Patuan Natoras, was dismissed from the head of the state for being involved in the movement against the Dutch. In Sibolga, his father worked as a *zaak waarnemer* (a case defender without a law degree) (Panggabean, 1992, pp. 30-31).

Maraden Panggabean got a chance to be a teacher at Schakelschool HKB with the help of Maruap Pohan, a wealthy entrepreneur and public figure in Sibolga. In many ways, an ethnic identity made it easy for Batak people to get a job, as they could rely on relatives, friends, or contacts from the Batak ethnic. The Batakese will generally be very excited to help people of their clan and ethnicity. As shown by Maruap Pohan, he tried to help Maraden Panggabean get a teaching job, although Maraden Panggabean needed a diploma to teach. In addition to ethnic consideration, Maruap accepted Maraden Panggabean because, at the time, the number of graduates of MULO in Cibola was still very limited. The educational background and knowledge that Maraden Panggabean obtained in MULO were sufficient to allow him to teach at the Elementary school level. It was evident in the absence of difficulties faced by Maraden Panggabean during his time as a teacher. Most of the students in HKB were children of the port labor force in Sibolga (Panggabean, 1992, pp. 30-31).

During his time in Sibolga, Maraden

Panggabean witnessed the arrival of the Japanese to Sibolga. The Japanese authority also allowed him to join the military. Starting from the Japanese need for an English-speaking interpreter, Maraden Panggabean was finally accepted as a translator for Sergeant Takemura. He was in charge of contacting various parties, civil government, and community leaders, particularly those in the villages, regarding matters related to war and security. Ahead of the arrival of the Japanese in Sibolga, he saw one interesting thing: the diminishing groups of Japanese who owned the grocery store, which sold a variety of kids' toys like the "Made in Japan" ballpoint, whose quality became a laughing stock. What was visible instead was Japanese entrepreneurs running photo studios. In the future, aside from taking pictures of the customers, they will take more pictures of places with "military values" (Panggabean, 1992, p. 32).

As he served as a translator in the Japanese Army (*onisi*), Maraden Panggabean indirectly obtained a lesson in the field of the military, as he put forward:

I even managed to understand the Japanese language, which is considerably difficult, and I managed to speak in simple conversations. I remember going with the Onisi force to Barus, 65 kilometers in the Northwest of Sibolga, West Coast of Sumatra, with a task to ambush the rest of the Dutch Army hiding in the middle of a swamp. I followed all of *Onisi's force movements: how to move, sneak in the forest*, and get close to the target, which was like a tiger approaching its prey and suddenly pouncing on the target with a terrible voice. It was a shame that this was the last chance to follow the patrol. Many things could be learned during duty in *Onisi* Butai. First is the power of motion and courage of the Japanese units. Second was their incredibly tight discipline (Panggabean, 1992, p. 38).

Maraden Panggabean was one of Batak's youths who was lucky enough during the Japanese occupation. When most of the youth in Tapanuli were directed to be *heiho* and *romusha*, he and a friend, Pandapotan Sitompul, were sent to the school of high employees in Batusangkar (Fort Van der Capellen) in West Sumatra. In practice, this school was more like military education than a school for high employee candidates. No wonder Maraden Panggabean obtained rather good military skills after finishing his studies. This was what pushed him to form forces. He named his troops the Forces of Indonesia, but the people are more familiar with the Maraden Forces (Panggabean,

1992, p. 59). During the revolution, the force led by Maraden was known to be very brave. Maraden's style, where he dressed a la cowboy, represents the figure of a revolutionary hero. However, he did not use the trousers made of hessian but pants a la Japan officer with the half pole barrel. Maraden was probably inspired by the Japanese troops he looked up to (Panggabean, 1992, p. 72; Vickers, 2009, p. 151).

In military circles in Tapanuli, Maraden Panggabean was influential and brave. When F.L. Tobing was appointed Resident of Tapanuli, he was offered to arrange and lead the Sibolga battalion. Maraden was reluctant to become an official government apparatus because he thought it would hinder his freedom. Only after establishing the Army of the Republic of Indonesia in 1946 did he enter the Army of the Republic of Indonesia (TRI) ranks. The reason was that he realized that there was only one course of government officials in charge of the state's security, so he was finally willing to bring himself and his army to the TRI. After Maraden Panggabean officially became part of the Indonesian military organization, he was directly involved in the war of independence in Sibolga and Tapanuli. The Indonesian government awarded him the title of freedom fighter for his services. In addition, he once served as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security.

The investigation into the modernity of the Batak people during the Dutch colonial and Japanese occupation periods provides insights into the roots of their involvement in politics and the military in Indonesia. This study reveals a historical continuity in the trajectory of the Batak people. The pronounced interest of the Batak people in education from the colonial era to the period of independence signifies a form of modernity inherent to their cultural milieu. Education is a pathway for attaining dominance in economic and political realms at both local and national levels. In colonial settings, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, education consistently exhibits a dual and paradoxical nature. Indigenous groups from diverse ethnic backgrounds undergo education, acquiring knowledge of values that deviate from their traditional norms. The primary objective of this educational process is to meet the labor demands in sectors such as trade, governance, agriculture, and infrastructure. However, ethnic and racial discrimination embedded within the educational systems implemented by the Dutch colonial administration in Indonesia and the British administration in Malaysia further reinforced ethnic and racial segregation in the colonial

territories. Education, as a component of colonial modernity, proves insufficient in eradicating the racial discrimination imposed by colonial authorities (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The modernity of the Batakness grew and expanded in the Dutch colonial period; that was when the Dutch government and the sending introduced Western education. The Dutch established several primary schools delivered in Dutch, and the ending had become the space for the Batakness to change their negative view of them. Since the 1930s to the independence, Batakness has been an ethnic group with the most educated workers compared to other ethnicities in Tapanuli. As a result, the Batak people dominated the government. In the Dutch colonial period, Batak people were hired as teachers and public officers. They then grew into modern Batak elites who adopted the ambiguous Dutch colonial modernity.

During the Japanese occupation, the push for the Batakness to obtain *hamajuon* (progress) and *harajaon* (power) became the reason to join politics with the Japanese. The new Batak elites formed in the Dutch colonial period got strategic positions in government and military in Tapanuli. The Japanese government provided them with greater freedom to participate in the two areas compared to what the Dutch provided. This motivated the Batak youth to enter the military and government education provided by the Japanese government so that they could work in the military and government.

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