THE PARMALIM MOVEMENT AND ITS
RELATIONS TO SI SINGA MANGARAJA XII:
A Reexamination of the Development of Religious
Movements in Colonial Indonesia

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Abstrak

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Introduction
During the later part of the nineteenth century when the Dutch began to expand colonial rule in Indonesia, the local power symbols who had been mediators between local people and outside powers began to undergo drastic changes. Against the intensification of colonial rule, protest movements arose in various parts of Indonesia including north Sumatra. Especially among the people whose power symbols were abolished by the Dutch, the religious movements in which followers expected the revival of their holy king often gave rise to. Such movements occasionally developed into the millenarian-like protests, in which participants passionately called for a total transformation of the existing order by the reappearance of their power symbol. The Parmalim movement which anxiously awaited the revival of the harajaon (kingdom) of Si Singa Mangaraja is one such movement.

Scholars have paid much attention to such religious movements that occasionally induced the masses into forms of protest against the colonial authorities. The research to date has explained that those participants, whose daily lives were rooted in their magico-religious belief systems, had no other choice than to resort to such millenarian expectations in order to change their plight. Furthermore, the literature is inclined to argue that those movements which arose in the earlier stages of colonial rule were highly revivalistic because participants were still deeply in touch with their traditional religious beliefs, while those which appeared in the later

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stages often became syncretic or “import-oriented”.3

However, such opinions seem to become highly problematic when we consider the actual circumstances of the participants in such movements. In the early stages of colonial rule, the colonized people tended to be generally impressed by the superiority of the colonial rulers who had defeated their traditional power symbols. In order to cope with such a situation, they often formed doctrines mixing new elements of foreign power with their traditional beliefs. On the other hand, the people who had been put under the colonial regime for long periods of time and had subsequently become dubious of legitimacy of colonial rule, often endeavored to revive their dissolving tradition as a symbol of their anti-colonialism. The history of the Parmalim movement presents to us a very interesting example in order to clarify the transformation of a doctrine fashioned by a religious movement which at first manifested a syncretic character by adopting new religious elements into Batak traditions, and later a highly revivalistic one, in which their dissolving tradition was given renewed meanings under the colonial regime. In this paper, I would like to take up the dynamism of the Parmalim movement which revived among the Toba Batak reverence for the last Si Singa Mangaraja of Ompu Pulo Batu in the later stages of colonial rule.

1. The Rise of the Parmalim Movement

The Parmalim movement was organized by Guru Somalaing, a Toba Batak datu in 1890. Datu was a healer, augur and magician and had much knowledge about the Batak holy books.4 Guru Somalaing had been a well-known datu among the Toba Batak and he had been an adviser of Si Singa Mangaraja XII, Ompu Pulo Batu.

During the era when Somalaing had been by Si Singa Mangaraja, Toba Batak society experienced drastic changes in both its political and religious spheres. In the Batak area which had generally maintained its independence except for the Mandailing region that had been placed under Dutch rule since the 1840s, the German Rhenish Missionary Society (Rheinischen Missions-Gesellschaft) began missionary activities from 1861 in order to make a Christian zone between the two Islamic areas of Aceh and Minangkabau. Then the Dutch government extended its influence into the Toba Batak region from the 1870s.

The Toba Batak chiefs who accepted German missionaries in their village were successfully in enlarging their influence among their rivals by establishing connections with the colonial government, while those who had not accepted missionaries became highly afraid of the transformation of the local balance of power. Consequently, they entreated the holy king of Si Singa Mangaraja who had been revered as an incarnation of Batara Guru among the Toba Batak, to rise up against the Dutch colonizers and German missionaries.5 Somalaing played an important role in leading military campaigns against the Dutch in 1878 and 1883. However, they lost the battles mainly due to the inferiority of their weapons and Si Singa Mangaraja XII himself was wounded at the battle of 1883.

After defeat in 1883, Si Singa Mangaraja did not rely on opinions of the datu. Ompu Pulo Batu then started to negotiate peace with the colonial government through the Sultan of Asahan.6 Somalaing in due course parted company with Si Singa Mangaraja.

Somalaing now fell into the dilemma. He was obliged to acknowledge the superiority of European colonial power. He came to see the rule of the Dutch and the Christianization of Toba as having been destined by some mightier source of power. On the other hand, it was not easy for him to accept the new order brought about by the Dutch. After the Dutch established

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6 Resident of Oostkust van Sumatra to Gouverneur Generaal of Nederlandsch Indië, (Bengkalis, 28 Aug. 1885), mailrapport 648/1885. The negotiations continued until 1886, but were not successful because Si Singa Mangaraja did not appear before Dutch officials.
colonial rule in Toba, the local chieftains who had showed a cooperative attitude toward the Dutch and the Christian missionaries were appointed colonial chiefs, while many of the former datu became Christians and were appointed church elders. However, those local leaders who had not been given such appointments began to encounter more difficulties than before in winning legal suits, opening new villages and maintaining such Toba Batak customs as taking the widow of one’s brother as a second wife.

After reflecting on this contradiction, one night he had a revelation from Jehova. According to his testimony, in a dream his soul was brought by Jesus Christ before God, who ordered him to preach a new doctrine. The belief which Jehova ordered him to preach was, according to his own account: pay respect to the elders, never tell a lie, do not take either dog’s meat or pork, or the meat or the blood of animals that died of illness, purify both soul and body. These admonitions were not especially new but were generally traditional Batak morals.

Somalaing said that his followers were to be called Parmalim. The word “parmalim” derived from the word “malim” which means “pure” or “holy” in Toba. Historically, the word malim came from the Arabic muallim, meaning “religious leader”. Presumably, when this word was introduced into Toba centuries before, it had helped to make up the idea of “holiness” in the Batak sense. For example, in a prayer to Si Singa Mangaraja, he was referred to as “raja na pitu hali malim, na pitu hali solam” (the raja who is sevenfold holy, sevenfold sacred). Si Singa Mangaraja and his appointed priests, parbaringin, did not take either dog’s meat or pork. This prescription seems to have derived from Hinduism rather than Islam. It had become part of Toba religious belief long before.

Somalaing preached that this code among religious elites should be applied to all his followers. Thus the Parmalim became “one who endeavours to be pure or holy” in the traditional sense.

The point of Somalaing’s new religion was that the Christian God ordered him to preach Toba indigenous values. Through the traditional means of a dream and by retaining the essence of the Toba Batak virtues, he found a way to gain access to the new source of power, Jehova, which appeared to be transforming Batak society. This was the initial step in establishing a new religious movement.

For Somalaing, the next step was to demonstrate ways in which to fight against colonial power. People who became impressed by European colonial power often showed particular interest to Europeans who were willing to share their assets with local people. An Italian traveler, E. Modigliani, who met Somalaing just after his revelation from Jehova and the German missionaries who were working in Toba appeared to Somalaing highly important figures to help him. Those Europeans had aims different from the Dutch, aims that occasionally were at odds.

Having arrived in Toba in October 1890, Modigliani was eager to travel to the north eastern part and the upper Asahan River region, both of which were not yet under Dutch rule. Since the Dutch authorities would not allow him to travel into those regions, Modigliani asked Somalaing who was well-known in those regions to guide him. Under Somalaing’s guidance, Modigliani was able to travel through the regions during the end of 1890 and the beginning of 1891. Although Modigliani left Toba after this travel, this Italian who was perceived by Somalaing as Tuan Rum, a deputy of Raja Rum, continued to be highly regarded among Parmalims as a figure helping them in their struggle against the Dutch.

Parmalims also paid particular attention to those German missionaries who were strongly opposed to the Dutch policy of the development of traffic between east coast of Sumatra and the Toba Batak region, due to the fact that such intercourse would induce the infiltration of Islam into Toba. One German missionary, P. Pohlig, was in particular revered. He was an

engineer who occasionally helped the Dutch in repairing their guns and machines. Such knowledge which brought about European superiority was highly mysterious to the Batak people. They were eager to be initiated into it. According to Pohlig’s report of 1893, Parmalims began to regard him as an incarnation of Si Singa Mangaraja.\footnote{“Aus der Battamission”, Berichte der Rheinischen Missions-Gesellschaft, (1893), pp. 325-326.}

These men [Parmalims] reveal really crazy ideas. Just now I have become the Singamangaraja. “You are it — they say: you have only changed your form!” A few days ago some were still here. I said to them, “Don’t bother me with your absurd reasonings. I am not the Singamangaraja”. “We know very accurately that you are it — they say — Debata [God] has told it to us”. Moreover, they said in order to convince me that I am he, “Your father, the former Singamangaraja, was shot by the Dutch in the arm, then went to heaven. He has sent you, but he has given you another forms, so that the Dutch could not recognize you”. They believe such nonsense, and that is their gospel.

According to the belief of the Toba Batak, the sahala (power) of Si Singa Mangaraja could be shifted to another person who would then be the next Si Singa Mangaraja. After Si Singa Mangaraja XII (Ompu Pulo Batu) was wounded in the battle of 1883, the people who believed that Si Singa Mangaraja was invulnerable began to doubt whether the sahala of Si Singa Mangaraja was still within him. Since Ompu Pulo Batu was then away in the Dairi region endeavouring to negotiate with the Dutch to find his new place under the colonial regime,\footnote{After Somalaing established the new religious movement, he visited Si Singa Mangaraja XII to ask for support for the movement. However, he refused that and Somalaing was driven away (de Boer, “De Permalimsektten”, pp. 379-380).} the Parmalims began to believe that Si Singa Mangaraja XII, having lost his sahala, had gone to heaven and that the sahala was now in Pohlig who appeared in the form of a Westerner. The fact that Pohlig had a scar on his hand similar to that of Ompu Pulo Batu received at the battle of 1883 also convinced Parmalims to believe that this missionary was an incarnation of Si Singa Mangaraja.

Parmalims believed that someday, when the time came, Tuan Rum and Raja Rum would appear in Toba, at which time Pohlig would reveal himself in the real form and assist them in driving the Dutch from the Batak area. The harajaon Si Singa Mangaraja would then be restored. Believing that the time was near, they had to prepare for it.

The Dutch government put the north eastern part of the Toba Batak region under their control in 1892 and introduced corvée labour among the local people. However, the Parmalims refused carrying out the colonial obligation and often were at odds with the colonial authorities. The Dutch authorities arrested Somalaing and banished him from the Batak area in 1896.\footnote{The decision of Gouverneur Generaal of Nederlandsch Indië, 22 May 1896, no. 2.} As the Dutch intensified their colonial rule, Parmalims eagerly looked forward to the intervention of Tuan Rum and Pohlig. In spite of their ardent expectations, Tuan Rum never reappeared in the Batak area and Pohlig never revealed himself in his true form.

2. The Intensification of the Dutch Colonial Rule in the Batak Area and Na Siak Bagi’s Parmalim Movement

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Dutch colonial policy on Sumatra became more active one. The colonial authorities began to extend more and more effort in suppressing the protest movements waged against the Dutch by Acehnese guerrillas and Si Singa Mangaraja. Si Singa Mangaraja XII who had been in the mountainous region of the north western part of Batak was shot to death by the colonial army in 1907.\footnote{Ahu Si Singamangaraja, pp. 286-296.} The Aceh War which had broken out in 1873 was brought to an end in 1912. By 1913 the whole island of Sumatra was put under Dutch colonial rule. The Toba, Dairi, Angkola and Mandailing regions were annexed into the residency of Tapanuli, while other Karo and Simalungun regions and east coastal principalities were annexed into that of East Coast of Sumatra.
The Dutch introduced a new district system into Sumatra in order to improve the efficiency of colonial administration. In Toba from 1886 on, the Dutch appointed about 170 raja ihutan (district chiefs) under whom raja padua (sub-chief of raja ihutan) and kepala kampong (village chiefs) were appointed. It was through these local colonial chiefs that the Dutch introduced corvée labour into Tapanuli and, from 1908 on, a poll-tax. However, the number of raja ihutan became too many for the Dutch colonial officials to handle, so after raja ihutan on active service died, their districts were merged instead of appointing successors. Furthermore, in 1916, the Dutch government appointed 12 new district chiefs (demang) and 25 assistant district chiefs (assistent demang) above raja ihutan. Those new chiefs were not appointed from among Toba chiefs but from Batak colonial officials who had been working under Dutch officials. The new assistant district chiefs were allowed to come into direct contacts with local residents in the course of their duties. In turn, raja ihutan, raja padua, and kepala kampong, who had played an important role as mediators between local people and the Dutch, were placed under the assistant district chief and became mere functionaries of the colonial government.

The intensification of colonial rule caused various distortions in Tapanuli. Up to the end of the nineteenth century at least, the Dutch authorities had attracted the Batak chiefs and datu by appointing them as colonial chiefs or church elders. However, the more the traditional patronage networks became disrupted by the new district administration, the more colonial obligations became a real burden on the people who could not understand the justification for those obligations. Also the Christian missionaries who had recommended to the colonial authorities the appointment of the Batak chiefs they had converted to Christianity as colonial chiefs found difficulties in keeping the people religiously interested because of the changing policy of the colonial government. The Batak Christians began to feel inequities arising between them and German missionaries in the administration of churches, especially in the area of church funds.

On the other hand, there arose a new generation who had been born and raised under the colonial regime, which was endeavouring to develop commercial and transportation systems, while supporting the activities of plantation and mining companies. Those who had been educated in missionary school found jobs in plantation companies, public works projects, commercial enterprises, trade business of forest products, etc. Those people who were able to travel out of the Batak area occasionally were given the opportunity to come into contact with the cultures, religions and political ideas of the modern world. Such experiences induced them to reconsider the colonial regime and became more conscious of the differences that existed among the European, the Batak people, other Indonesians and the Asian migrants who worked for plantation companies in East Coast of Sumatra. Under such circumstances, the Parmalim movement also began to reconsider the place of the Batak people in the new situation.

Despite the fact that the Parmalim movement continued after Somalaing’s arrest, either German missionaries or Modigliani would not come to Parmalims’ aid, and people began to harbour doubts about what Somalaing preached. Then around 1898, another man appeared who began to attract people by claiming that the colonization of the Batak people by the Dutch was a punishment in retribution for sins the Batak had against their high god, Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon. This man, by the name of Si Jaga Simatupang, was a goldsmith. His home village, Untemungkur, had been under Dutch influence since 1878 after the first unsuccessful offensive waged by Si Sinaga Mangaraja against the Dutch and where Christian missionaries had been active since the beginning of the 1880s. Since gold was one of the main media of exchange, goldsmiths often became small-scale bankers and providers of credit. However, this type of credit business declined dramatically due to the development of church funds.

17 W. N. Hoetagaloeng, Testimony of Gayus Hutahaean, (Pangururan, 2 Feb. 1922), in V. E. Korn Collection, no. 454, and Bonifacius (de mantripolitie) to Controleur of Toba, (Balige, 10 May 1929), in V. E. Korn Collection, no.454.
loaned at lower interest. Si Jaga’s situation was quite similar to that of Somalaing, who was dissatisfied with the new regime while realizing that European power had become dominant.

He had become a follower of Somalaing, but like others, he found the movement unable to fulfill his expectations. Then one day, by his own account, Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon appeared to him in a dream and revealed a new belief called ugamo malim (pure religion). 18 Despite using Somalaing’s term, malim, Si Jaga’s revelation came not from Jehova but from the Toba indigenous god, who, according to the traditional belief, had created and continues to create the world, as well as ruling over the destiny of human beings.19

In order to revive the belief in Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon, Si Jaga introduced the concept of sin, dosa, a term frequently used among Indonesian Christians. He perceived that Christians thought of “sins” committed against God as a key to explain human history, and adopted this notion in his attempt to clarify the present situation involving not only of the Batak but also of other peoples. He began by developing the Toba tradition that a flag symbolized the whole world, arguing that the Dutch tricolour (red, white, dark-blue) represented the three groups of the world’s people. In order to explain each of these groups, he turned to the Old Testament in an attempt to discover a key to explaining the place of the Batak in the modern world. According to his own interpretation, the red was the colour of the descendents of Shem (the eldest son of Noah), including Jews, Chinese, Japanese, Malays, Javanese and Batak. The white was the colour of descendents of Ham – the Indians. The dark-blue (black, according to Si Jaga) was the colour of the descendents of the youngest son, Japheth – Westerners (Sibontarmata).20 This arrangement made the Batak people fellow descendents of Shem with the Jews whose relationship with God is the main theme of the Old Testament.

His interpretation continued: Ham, who had not helped his drunken father, Noah, had been the most sinful, so that his descendents has been destined to be subordinate to the descendents of Shem and Japheth. The descendents of Japheth and Shem both must have been blessed by God, but Si Jaga reasoned, Japheth’s descendents must have been less sinful throughout history because Westerners had the most prestige now, while the Batak who were supposed to be descendents of Shem were under their rule.

In order that the Batak expiate their sins, and by that means become independent from the rule of the Sibontarmata, Si Jaga was given the order from Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon to preach a new set of commandments. They were:21

1. Praise God (Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon).
2. Pay respect to Raja.
3. Love all human beings.
5. Do not commit adultery, do not steal and do not kill people.
6. Never mock the humble.
7. Never mislead the blind.
8. Establish funds (uang ayuran) for the life of the poor.
9. Do not charge interest in money or rice.
10. Do not eat pork, dog meat or drink blood.

Although some prescriptions, such as those against adultery, stealing, and partaking of pork, dog meat or blood, were traditional virtues and were shared by Somalaing and his followers, others appeared to owe more to the Ten Commandments and the Christian gospel of love, since Toba Batak moral principles had up until that time never included such injunctions as to love all human beings, never mock the humble, and never mislead the blind. Traditional ideas placed little emphasis on benevolence towards the weaker members of society.22 However, according to Si Jaga, the less endowed suffering from their destiny were more likely to realize that they had sinned against Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon. He stated, “sins of ten years will be forgiven to anyone who had confessed all sins”, and “even if someone is a raja and holy, his soul would surely go to hell if he commits a sin. But even if he is humble in this world, he would surely gain welfare and later his

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20 Ibid., pp. 192-193.
21 Hoetagaloeng, Testimony of Gayus Hutahaean.
soul would gain a new shape if he observes the commandment and the law of God”. Si Jaga adopted the name Na Siak Bagi, (He Who Suffers Misfortune), the one who was most likely to realize sins against Debat Mulajadi Na Bolon.

By clarifying the place of the Batak people in the larger scale context of the modern world and preaching the establishment of funds for the poor, Na Siak Bagi found followers in Toba and Simalungun. Those followers ranged from former followers of Somalaing to Batak Christians who became dissatisfied with German missionaries and Batak chiefs who were willing to establish funds. The Dutch government at first did not pay much attention to his movement because it did not manifest any anti-colonial idea. However, although Na Siak Bagi did not explicitly preach anti-colonialism, Batak people would gradually begin to hope that he would deliver them from colonial rule.

3. The Death of Si Singa Mangaraja XII and the Development of Na Siak Bagi’s Parmalim Movement

At the turn of the century when the Dutch decided to intensify their colonial rule over north Sumatra, Si Singa Mangaraja XII was killed by the colonial army in 1907. His corpse was displayed in the public at Balige and later at Silindung before being buried, in order to impress upon the people the establishment of the Dutch colonial regime. According to the Batak traditional belief, the sahala of the dead Si Singa Mangaraja shifted to the next Si Singa Mangaraja. Those who would not accept the idea that the harajaon Si Singa Mangaraja had been destroyed, believed that the sahala of Ompu Pulo Batu moved to the next Si Singa Mangaraja. The colonial government began to worry about rumours of the reappearance of Si Singa Mangaraja after the death of Ompu Pulo Batu. The Dutch disinterred the corpse to reconfirm the death of Si Singa Mangaraja XII. The colonial authorities then noticed that other persons were being regarded as candidates for a new Si Singa Mangaraja. After the Dutch found that Si Jaga was one of them, the colonial authorities arrested him in 1910.

However, the arrest of Na Siak Bagi merely worked to intensify followers’ doubt about the Dutch activities. Na Siak Bagi who preached to expiate sins against God, did not promote protest against the Dutch. The Dutch interference with the movement caused his followers to consider that the Dutch was highly worried about Si Jaga’s movement because he in due course might have a proper access to the will of God. Consequently followers rather reconfirmed their belief and began to be more dubious of the legitimacy of the Dutch rule.

Those who took over the leadership of the Parmalim movement after the arrest of Na Siak Bagi included Mulia Naipospos, an ex-church elder, and Gayus Hutahaean, an ex-school teaching assistant. Mulia Naipospos who had been parbaringin (sacrificial priest) appointed by Si Singa Mangaraja, converted himself to Christianity in the 1890s. He was appointed church elder in the parish of Laguboti. However, after his conversion, he experienced the loss of his two children and mother. Habolonan (having a large family) was one of the most highly valued virtues among the Toba Batak and one of the main reasons why German missionaries attracted the Batak people was that the Christian churches had contributed to decreasing the death rate among them by introducing modern medical treatment. Also Mulia had been dissatisfied with the administration of church funds by German missionaries. Mulia was therefore attracted by Na Siak Bagi’s doctrine that Batak people must be conscious of sins against Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon and his preaching of the establishment of funds for the poor.

Gayus, on the other hand, had been working for missionary school at Laguboti. He had been dissatisfied with the church hierarchy in which German missionaries placed themselves above Batak Christians and also that...
the church funds were being lent with interest, although the Bible prohibited such a practice.  When he first heard the doctrine of Parmalim from Mulia Naipospos, he thought that it was consistent with the teaching of the Bible.

In order to revive belief in Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon, Mulia and Gayus petitioned the colonial authorities to allow the performance of traditional Batak religious ceremonies in which buffaloes, hens and cocks were sacrificed to that god. The colonial government had prohibited the Batak people to hold such traditional sacrificial ceremonies by the request of the German missionaries. Gayus, however, did not agree with such a prohibition, because there were many descriptions of sacrificial ceremonies in the Bible. The Dutch then allowed Parmalims to hold their religious ceremonies in the traditional style because the colonial authorities did not find any explicit anti-Dutch element in their belief.

However, this permission was a shock to the Christian missionaries. One of the German missionaries asked Gayus why Parmalims revered for Si Singa Mangaraja who had protested against Christian activities. Gayus again referring to the description on Moses in the Old Testament replied that the Batak revered for Si Singa Mnagaraja as a representative of Debata Mulajadi Nabolon as the Jews revered Moses as such. Gayus, who had been a Christian since childhood, had little knowledge about Batak traditional religious ceremonies and Si Singa Mangaraja. He justified traditional sacrificial ceremonies and their holy king in Christian terms under the new colonial situation.

4. The Revival of Reverence for Si Singa Mangaraja XII

The Parmalims were not the only Toba Batak group that endeavoured to revive beliefs in Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon and Si Singa Mangaraja during the 1910s. During that time colonial public works and plantation companies in north Sumatra were offering job opportunities to Toba Batak young men, and the colonial government was encouraging Toba Batak people to migrate to Simalungun in the residency of East Coast of Sumatra in order to develop agricultural activities there in exchange for non-imposition of corvée labour. Going out of the Toba Batak region, they had contact with other Indonesians of Malay, Minangkabau and other Batak peoples of Simalungun and Mandailing. Such inter-ethnic contact induced these Toba Batak people not only to reassess the place of the Batak people under colonial regime but also occasionally to give rise to friction with other Indonesian peoples. The plantation companies operating in East Coast of Sumatra were under the jurisdiction of the Malay principalities, which had been granted political autonomy over their territory by the Dutch. These Malay principalities generally offered better treatment for Malay and Minangkabau peoples whom those Malay rulers had had firm ties with. Also, Simalungun Batak tended to react to the rapid Toba Batak immigration by looking down on them as kasar (coarse). Furthermore, the Mandailing migrants in East Coast of Sumatra who were mostly Muslims, preferred to call themselves “Malay” to avoid the Batak stigma.

On the other hand, young Toba Batak were given the opportunity to come in contact with Islam and nationalism in colonial urban towns. The Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association), which was established in Java in 1912 as a movement promoting the spiritual and commercial development of indigenous Muslims, started to establish its branches in north Sumatra from about 1915. Under such circumstances, some Toba Batak, who had learned esoteric arts from Islamic leaders of the Sarekat Islam, endeavoured to revive beliefs in Debata

Mulajadi Na Bolon and Si Singa Mangaraja utilizing Islamic ideas. The movement led by those Batak was called Parhudamdam and it attracted hundreds of young followers in Toba, Karo, and Simalungun in 1915-17. Its adherents claimed that through new ways of worshipping Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon and Si Singa Mangaraja, one could achieve invulnerability. Those who were convinced of being invulnerable occasionally confronted the colonial army. Their protests were, however, suppressed by the colonial authorities and the movement collapsed by 1920.

Another example is Hatopan Kristen Batak (Batak Christian Association) established in 1917 in order to promote harmony among Batak Christians and to advance the Batak people. The Association in 1918 began to oppose to the entry of plantation companies to Tapanuli. The leader of the Association, H. Manullang, complained to the Dutch Governor General at Bogor (Buitenzorg) and the plantation plan was cancelled.39 At meetings held by the Association, traditional Batak music and dancing were performed, and participants affirmed that the sahala of Si Singa Mangaraja was now restored in H. Manullang.40 H. Manullang was also a member of Insulinde, which was reestablished after the Indies Party (Indies Party) that advocated racial equality, socio-economic justice and ultimate independence was dissolved. To the Toba Batak, Indonesian nationalism became a very important ingredient in coping with the friction they were experiencing with neighbouring peoples.

Under such circumstances, Si Singa Mangaraja who had been a mediator between the Toba Batak and Malay rulers and who had been revered among other Simalungun, Karo and Dairi peoples, became a highly important ethnic symbol among the Toba Batak.

After Si Jaga’s retirement from the movement, Parmalims began to expect Hermanus, Si Jaga’s son-in-law, to lead their movement. Hermanus had been a follower of Na Siak Bagi and then moved to Singapore, where he became an assistant to Seventh Day Adventist. He returned to Toba in 1921 as Si Jaga’s successor. His return stimulated the movement and intensified its hopes for the reappearance of Si Singa Mangaraja. Hermanus and Gayus preached that the harajaon Si Singa Mangaraja would soon be restored, so Parmalim followers did not need to fulfill the colonial duties. The Dutch authorities intervened in the movement and arrested Hermanus and Gayus in 1923.

During various endeavours to revive Si Singa Mangaraja made among the Toba Batak, the figure of Si Singa Mangaraja XII who had fought against the Dutch came to be reappreciated among them. After the death of Ompu Pulo Batu, people began to look to his sons with similar respect. During the time when the Parhudamdam movement was flourishing in Toba, Mulia Naipospos paid visits to Ompu Pulo Batu’s family who was interned at Pearlaja by the colonial government.42 The Dutch authorities were so worried about the spread of rumours of the reappearance of Si Singa Mangaraja that they decided to send three sons of Ompu Pulo Batu off to Java in 1916 and the other two sons in 1918. However, these moves did nothing to lessen the reverence held among the people for the sons of Si Singa Mangaraja XII. Whenever his eldest son, Buntal, returned to Toba for temporary visit, thousands of Toba people came to him to pay their regards. Mulia began to hope that Buntal would become the next Si Singa Mangaraja under the colonial regime. In 1927, he petitioned the Dutch authorities to return Buntal to Toba to assume his rightful place among the Toba Batak as Si Singa Mangaraja.43 Parmalims ardently expected for the reappearance of Si Singa Mangaraja.

After severely suppressing the nationalistic movements by the Indonesian Communist Party and the Indonesian Nationalist Party, the Dutch government decided on more leniency concerning the revival of local traditional

43 Raja Manangar to Gouverneur van Oostkust van Sumatra, (Huta Tinggi, Laguboti, 2 Feb. 1927), in V. E. Korn Collection, no. 441.
institutions and power symbols as long as they did not disturb the colonial order. The Dutch authorities allowed the return of the four sons of Ompu Pulo Batu to Toba by the decision of the Governor General on 21 July 1930. Buntal then came back to Tapanuli in 1933 and was appointed as an official attached to the Dutch assistant resident in Tarutung in 1934. However, the Dutch government would not allow Buntal to become Si Singa Mangaraja because the restoration of Si Singa Mangaraja would give rise to new anti-colonial sentiments among the Batak people.

The Parmalims, nevertheless, did not abandon their belief that the harajaon Si Singa Mangaraja would be restored in due course after the Batak expiated sins against Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon. The Parmalim movement continued to the present day. Among them, the figure of Ompu Pulo Batu, the late Si Singa Mangaraja XII, was revived as their holy king. Today Parmalims claim that it was Si Singa Mangaraja XII who ordered Si Jaga to preach the ugamo mali to the Batak people.

Conclusion

Studies on the history of Southeast Asia have spent much energy on the anti-colonial movements that gave rise to independent nation states in the region. With regard to anti-colonial religious movements that looked for the revival of their traditional power symbols, those studies have generally referred to them as pre-nationalistic in character or as movements whose adherents had no other political channel to change their situations.

In this paper, I have to the contrary attempted to show the dynamism within such messianic movements that adopted both new beliefs and political ideas. At the earlier stages of the colonial rule, people endeavoured to gain access to the new source of power through traditional means. When this new source of power did not fulfill their expectations and colonial rule was further intensified, people began to reconsider the dissolving traditions giving them renewed meanings. As anti-colonial sentiment developed among the people, these dissolving traditions became their symbols of anti-colonial movements.

The research to date which has interpreted the adherents of such religious movements as people who stuck to their traditional beliefs and who had no other choice than to resort to millenarian expectations to change their circumstances needs to be reconsidered. Such messianic movements arose during the colonial era when nationalistic movements were organizing around those religious followers and also after the independence of Indonesia. When we consider the social circumstances facing the members of the religious movements, what they were advocating suggests us very interesting perspectives about how to understand the relationships between religious and other political and social movements.

44 Politieke politioneel verslag over het derde kwartaal 1930, res. Tap., mailrapport 1240/1930. The remaining son of Si Singa Mangaraja XII, David Pangkilim, was considered to be “insane” and was kept in a mental hospital in Bogor.