CHAPTER 2
THE BACKGROUND OF BATAK TOBA TRIBE

2.1 History

The relative isolation of Batak country lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century as late as 1347 the famous geographer Jung Hun maintained that Lake Toba existed only in legend. It was only in 1853 that the lake was discovered by the explorer Van Deer Tuuk.

The center of Batak region has moved with the passage of time from the slopes of Pusuk Buhit and the Samosir island to the South-West shore of Lake Toba, more precisely, to the Bakkara valley. It was at Bakkara that the high kings or the Sisingamangaraja or Lion kings whose supremacy was recognized by all the other chiefs or Rajas of Batak region resided. The ancestor of the lion king was, according to legend, endowed with extra-ordinary power: that of paralyzing his enemies by gazing into their eyes and that of striking them down simply by putting out his tongue showing a spot with black hair. King, he was also by extension father, or grandfather (ompung), for the everlasting love, protection and justice he had given and always encouraging unity among his people. He was also a high priest, assuring harmonious reactions with the different divinities and the supreme God in relations to whom he was, at one and the mediator. This religious function explains why he was himself considered divine (Dewa) and object to a cult (the “Dewa Raja” cult).

Alas the divine powers of the “Dewa Raja” were not enough to stop the Dutch military occupation or the Bakkara valley on the 30th April 1878 in the course of the famous Batak war for independence against the Dutch colonial regime, Ducth
troops burned down Bakkara and the several other villages and forced Sisingamangaraja and followers to flee. After a few years of guerilla warfare in 1907 Sisingamangaraja XII was at last killed as hero in course of an unsuccessful attack against the Dutch.

If a few missionaries preceded the Dutch Colonial troops as we have seen their pioneer Nommensen of the Rheinche Missiongesellschaft (1881) entered Tano Batak, causing with the advent of Christianity a profound influence and change in Batak culture part curly in Toba region, which has reminded essentially animist, called *Spielberg* right up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The animist culture is relatively well known to us since the Batak script delivered from the Indian script, and has there by preserved evidence of their social and religion system in their old books called *Pustaha*.

Moreover, the numerous accounts of the early travelers and explorer, as we have seen, contain a wealth of precious detail which otherwise would have been lost. The existence of the Batak text and these accounts allow us to existence of the Batak text and these accounts allow us to form a relatively precise idea of the material and spiritual worlds of the Bataks before their pressurization by Islam in South, and Christianity of the last century in Centre and North of the Batak land. As early as beginning of last century the Padri’s from Bonjol Minangkabau had made several expedition to the Batak country to convert the Bataks into the Islamic faith, they reached in this expedition far into the central of the Batak country via Mandailing and Angola near the border, where they were succesfull, but failed in Silindung and most in part of Toba. The Mandailing and
Angola Bataks left after their conversion into the Islam, their traditional religious beliefs almost leaving no artifact contempory to it, at the present time.

### 2.2 The System of Batak Toba Society

The Batak people apply patriarch or called “patrilial” in which every Batak Toba always get inheritance family name from his father. The family name is useful enough to determine one’s position or level in society. Besides, it can determine family tree and one’s originality, the family name or marga shows the origin of family clan jewelers and land based on her ability to persuade and the kindness of her parents and her brothers. According to animist belief of Batak, the system of Batak society is the reflection of macro cosmos, in which man is inseparable from nature, man, united with nature.

Man is a micro cosmos in big cosmos. The concept of macro cosmos states that nature was formers there earth, every earth led by a god. The lower earth *(Banua Toru)* led by Batara Guru who always gives rain, lights, wave, thunder and fertility of land. Beside, the lower earth can also determined how far the moon, day and second give advantage.

The middle earth *(Banua Tonga)* led by Mangala Bula, the god who inherited to man, and he was even regarded to create man in pregnancy.

The upper earth *(Banua Ginjang)* is led by Asi-Asi, the god regulated life and death, old and young age, wealth and bravery. Those three earths above are inseparable unity from one anther. The lower earth is the bottom of all earths which reflects lights, thunder, rain, and fertility of land. Light, rain comes from upper earth. The middle earth is the agent of the three earths.
From the explanation above we can interpret that the lower earth is the hell while the upper earth is the heaven. Batakese cosmos concept doesn’t know about hell or heaven. The association of macro cosmos is the reflection from the three groups of Batak society:

a. Wife givers (*Hula-hula*) represent the upper earth.

b. Similar lineage (*Dongan sabutuha*) represents the middle earth.

c. Wife receivers (*boru*), represents the lower earth.

The system of Batak society is the reflection of the well order of cosmos which is Inseparable from the nature but in it is interaction; they are ruled by traditional norms, so that the society system goes on well and peaceful society. The breaks of the harmony of life cause the unstability cosmos.

It causes the anger and disaster; the continous dry season and disease that bring death and others. To stabilize the unstability of the cosmos needs sacred ceremony asking for *Papurpur Sapata* (excuses for mistakes).

The three groups of society system have to be presented in every ceremony. They have their own function and position of a group depends on the blood relation and the three families to those who run the ceremony. They can be wife givers (*Hula-hula*), wife receivers (*Boru*) or similar lineage (*Dongan Sabutuha*). This can be described like the Batakese expressing : *Rundut biur ni eme asa porngis.pasimpar andor asa ramor*, stating that the three complicated families do not make the relation wide a part, but it makes the relation closer.
2.3 Religion

Batak Toba people impersonally acknowledge the existence of power outside human power. Thus, this reality can be seen thoroughly from the people who give up the power intended. In this case, each individual has to obey the power by respecting it in their daily life. Thus, respectful ways can be differentiated worship in realizing the power sense. In fact, everybody has the worship ceremony with his own way in order to get protections of natural risk, contagious diseases, or animals attack. It is also done to get bless in marriage and good fortune as well.

People had already believed in god long after Christian while Moslem cause in good fortune after Christian has been spread to all over the world.

In the opinion of Batak people, God is a trinity which has different functions. The highest is called *Mulajadi Na Bolon* that dominates the whole nature cosmos. The traditional Batak cosmology divides it’s existences in three levels.

The upper is God’s of kingdom, *Mulajadi Na Bolon* and the place of the human’s activity; and the lower is the place of ghosts and devils which governed by *Naga Padoh*, namely Dragon. Batak Toba acknowledge the world and the upper world. Every level has a special function in the upper world. Besides, every level also has a special function in the harmony or life.

Due to the meaning of the trinity of Batak religion, it can not clearly determine the classification of the original ancestor’s religion. The assimilation between one element and another element is very complicated to determine the
first religion of Batak Toba people professed. However, as inheritance, the
religion can be seen from the principles of the life system of the followers and the
ceremonies in *Parmalim* religion or *Parbaringin* which still exist in a small group
of Batak society in Toba now. The dynasty of the Sisingamangaraja was the king
follower *Parmalim* religion or *Parbaringin*.

Formerly until today, there are variations of understanding. However,
actually, the Batak people had known Gods trinity has the same meaning with
trinity in Christian. Since missionaries entered Batak land, Batakinese are
dominantly Christians.