

Gondang Sabangunan among the Protestant Toba Batak People in the 1990s *

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This article is a study of the changes that have occurred in the uses, functions, meanings, musical style and performance dynamics of *gondang sabangunan*, the ceremonial music of the Toba Batak people of North Sumatra, and its associated *tortor* dancing as a result of the large-scale conversion of the people to Christianity. In pre-Christian times (before the 1860s), the performance of *gondang-tortor* was a form of religious observance based on specific rules, and as such was an integral part of the social and religious code known as *adat*. Changes in the religious and political orientation of Toba society in the period between the 1860s and the end of the twentieth century resulted in changes of style and meaning in ritual performances such as *gondang sabangunan*. For more than thirteen decades now the church has controlled the Christian Tobas' ritual performance practices. When, after almost a century of conflict between the missionaries and their congregants, the Protestant church promulgated a new approach to performing *gondang* and *tortor* in *adat* and church feasts, as recorded in its 1952 Order of Discipline, its intention was to minimise the practice of spirit beliefs and unify the Protestants' way of using the *gondang-tortor* tradition.¹ This and the subsequent 1968 and 1987 Orders of Discipline of the *Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* (Batak Protestant Christian Church [HKBP]) and the 1982 Order of Discipline of the *Gereja Kristen Protestant Indonesia* (Protestant Christian Indonesian Church [GKPI]), aimed to de-contextualise the practice of *gondang* and *tortor* from

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¹ The Order of Discipline (*Ruhut-ruhut Paminsangon*) is the official pronouncement of the church synod about the rules and disciplines, based on Christian teachings, which control the behaviour of Protestants and regulate *adat* and musical performance practice. There have been seven Orders of Discipline to date; the current Order of Discipline was formulated in 1987 (HKBP) and 1982 (GKPI).

the traditional Toba animist religious practice and re-contextualise it within the framework of Christian teaching.²

Despite these attempts, unification of practice has never been achieved: the way the *gondang-tortor* tradition is performed differs in each Protestant community, since each performance depends on how its participants interpret the relationship between *adat* and the Order of Discipline. The situation has been further complicated by contradictory government policies. On the one hand, the government recognises the Protestant church as one of its five official world religions. On the other, President Sukarno decreed that the nation should return to its diverse roots and cultures in the post-Independence years. This included, in paradoxical defiance of church policies, the encouragement of performances of pre-colonial 'animist' rituals (though often in secular contexts) and the building of ancestral monuments (*tugu*).³ Many Toba built such monuments, especially in the early 1960s, an activity that certainly increased the people's interest in traditional ceremonies, music and dance.⁴

The current Orders of Discipline expressly forbid the traditional mode of *gondang* performance, fearing its power to induce spirit possession and the possible return of participants to paganism—an attitude that does not take into account the positive social function of *adat* and the *gondang-tortor* tradition. Yet they fail clearly to elucidate how a congregation must deal with the *gondang-tortor* tradition at *adat* ceremonial feasts. Therefore, while some congregations conscientiously comply with the edicts, others neglect them, depending on how strictly they wish to observe *adat* vis-a-vis the church laws. The resulting uncertainty or 'split' in the religious consciousness of members of the Toba Batak Protestant church and how it is manifest in their practice of *gondang-tortor* is the subject of this article.⁵

In the 1990s, Toba individuals and social groups adhered to a variety of religious beliefs. Contemporary attitudes towards the *gondang-tortor* tradition took at least four forms: (i) the thoroughly *adat*-oriented, (ii) the thoroughly Christian practice-oriented; (iii) the simultaneously *adat*- and Christian practice-oriented and (iv) the primarily entertainment-oriented. The present study focusses on the third category, and specifically on my analysis of a pre-funeral ceremony (*saur matua*) held in 1991 by people who had migrated from Samosir Island to Medan, and two exhumation of bones ceremonies (*mangongkal holi*) held by Protestant families in Hutaraja (Kecamatan Sipoholon) and Medan in 1994. I have selected these ceremonies because, as ritual ceremonies specifically aimed at asking for blessings from the spirits of the ancestors, and having links to pre-Christian *tondi* cults and *hasipelebegan* (spirit worship),⁶ they are

² Most members of the Protestant Toba Batak community belong to the two biggest Protestant church institutions, the *Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* and the *Gereja Kristen Protestant Indonesia* (founded by Toba Batak ministers in Pematang Siantar in 1964). At the time of my field work, the HKBP had 2,548 churches with 1,598,346 members (see Almanac, HKBP, 1993: 380) while the GKPI owned 895 churches with 239,258 members (see Almanac, GKPI, 1994: 521).

³ By 'animist' is meant veneration of the spirits of nature and the ancestors. On the contradictions of government policy, see Lorraine Aragon, *Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000) 275.

⁴ Edward M. Bruner, 'Megalith, Migration and the Segmented Self,' *Cultures and Societies of North Sumatra*, ed. Rainer Carle (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1987) 137–39.

⁵ Sandra A Niessen, in her study *Batak Cloth and Clothing: A Dynamic Indonesian Institution* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1993) 98, develops the idea that a split has characterised the Toba Batak universe since the 'donning of Christianity.'

⁶ On the functions of *gondang* and *tortor* in spirit belief practice (the *tondi* cults), see Artur Simon, 'Social and Religious Functions of Batak Ceremonial Music,' *Cultures and Societies of North Sumatra*, ed. Reiner Carle (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1987) 343–45.

problematic sites for Christians. They are also, with weddings, the most common contemporary Toba *adat* ceremonies. It is in such ceremonies that we may most clearly observe the Church's efforts to de- and re-contextualise *adat* practices by separating them from the religious context and beliefs which gave them meaning.⁷ Finally, it is in these circumstances that we may observe the dialectic created out of the participants' efforts to reconcile two diametrically opposing norms of *gondang-tortor* performance. This is the first such study of the performance of *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor* within the contemporary Toba Batak Protestant church.

Gondang Sabangunan and Tortor

The *gondang sabangunan* consists of a set of *taganing* (five single-headed, conical, tuned braced drums—individually named the *tingting*, the *paidua ni tingting*, the *painonga*, the *paidua odap*, and the *odap-odap*—hung from a wooden beam and struck with a pair of wooden sticks), two bass drums (*gordang* [single-headed drum] and *odap* [double-headed-drum]), a set of four suspended gongs (*oloan*, *ihutan*, *panggora* and *doal*), a *sarune* (double-reed aerophone) and a *hesek* (a metal or glass idiophone beaten with a wooden stick, metal rod or spoon).⁸ The performance of this musical ensemble was central to Toba religious and cultural practices. It mediated the worship of the supernatural powers and ancestral spirits at life cycle ceremonies, calendrical rice-growing events, harvest celebrations and healing ceremonies, serving as a communicative medium that strengthened relationships between individuals within their social groups, and between humans, the supernatural powers (e.g. Mula Jadi Na Bolon, Batara Guru, Soripada, Mangala Bulan, Saniang Naga Laut, Boraspati ni Tano) and the ancestral spirits (*sahala ni ompu sijolo-jolo tubu*). A *gondang* performance without a ritual ceremony was not *adat*.⁹

The *gondang sabangunan* and its associated *tortor* dancing must be performed simultaneously. The *tortor* is a ritual language-like means of communication serving to venerate the deities and honour the wife-giving party at an *adat* feast. For centuries, the people practised *gondang* and *tortor* as part of their religious observances, applying specific social and religious rules known as *adat ni gondang* (rules for performing *gondang* and *tortor*). These rules guided the ceremonial participants: the musicians (*pargonsi*), ceremonial dancers (*panortor*) and ceremonial hosts (*hasuhuton* or *suhut*). They covered all aspects of the performance: how to invite the *gondang* musicians to play, how to address the musicians during the performance and request a *gondang-tortor* sequence, how to start and end a *gondang* performance, how many *gondang* pieces to play, how to dance the *tortor* and how to bestow and receive blessings via the *tortor*.¹⁰

⁷ For a further discussion of the 'mission dichotomy' that separated ritual practices from the beliefs 'in which they were once embedded,' see Toby Alice Volkman, *Feasts of Honor: Ritual and Change in the Toraja Highlands*, Illinois Studies in Anthropology No. 16 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985) 33–37.

⁸ For a discussion of the structure and function of the instruments of the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble, with illustrations of the instruments, see Mauly Purba, 'Gondang Sabangunan Ensemble Music of the Batak Toba People: Musical Instruments, Structure, and Terminology,' *Journal of Musicological Research* 21.1–2 (2002): 28–45.

⁹ Lothar Schreiner, *Das Bekenntnis der Batak-Kirche* (München, 1966) 296.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the pre-Christian rules, see Mauly Purba, 'Adat ni Gondang: Rules and Structure of the Gondang Performance in Pre-Christian Toba Batak Adat Practice,' *Asian Music* 34.1 (2002–3): 67–109. See also Artur Simon, 'Social and Religious Functions.'

Adat for the Contemporary Protestant Toba Batak

To a number of contemporary anthropologists, the idea of *adat* is a construct, arising from a discourse of power between the colonial government (in collusion with its handmaiden Christianity) and the indigenous people, and reflecting the desire to separate traditional custom from religion.¹¹ *Adat* is realised in the indigenous religion, which Christian missionaries and Christianised Toba refer to as *hasipelebeguan* (paganism). One Christian Toba, Sianipar, is of the view that *adat* and paganism are inseparable aspects of the same phenomenon.¹²

During the time of the German missionaries (1860-1940), who had little understanding of *adat* but a profound opposition to all aspects of *hasipelebeguan*, the Protestant church portrayed *adat* as a divisible system.¹³ Having failed in initial efforts to ban *adat* altogether, the missionaries' proselytising strategy was to 'rupture *adat*'¹⁴ by dividing it into three categories: the anti-Christian, the neutral and the pro-Christian.¹⁵ They prohibited *adat* practices that they classified as anti-Christian and allowed those that were classified as neutral or pro-Christian. As Schreiner observed, this categorisation was intended to assist the process of the Christianisation of *adat*, which began in the 1870s.¹⁶ As part of the process, the missionaries devised sets of church laws that regulated the practice of *adat* among their converts.

By the 1940s, after 80 years of contact, the missionaries had gradually changed their perception of *adat*. Although they still made judgements of *adat* practices on the basis of their three categories, they began to allow the people to perform some *adat* practices which had formerly been prohibited.¹⁷ The missionaries left the Batak Lands in the mid 1940s leaving Toba ministers responsible for all matters associated with the church and its congregations. The transformation of leadership brought a new era to the Toba Batak Protestant church. Within ten years the newly elected church council had introduced a revised Order of Discipline which accommodated some *adat* practices and allowed Protestants to perform *adat* ceremonies to the accompaniment of *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor*. Thus the 1952 Order of Discipline, whose

¹¹ See, for example, Mary M Steedly, *Hanging Without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Post-colonial Karoland* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) and the writings of Rita Kipp on the Karo Batak. Aragon (*Fields of the Lord*, 158) suggests that the origin of the word—from the Arabic '*ada* meaning 'habit, wont, custom, usage or practice'—likely entered the archipelago over centuries of extensive Middle Eastern and Malay trade as a way of representing and explaining indigenous philosophies and practices to outsiders.

¹² F.H. Sianipar, 'Religion and Adat,' *The South East Asia Journal of Theology* 14.1 (1973): 28–29.

¹³ The same process is observable in other parts of the archipelago where Christian missionaries were active. See for example, Toby Alice Volkman, *Feasts of Honor* 36 and Aragon, *Fields of the Lord* 158f.

¹⁴ The phrase is taken from Aragon, *Fields of the Lord* 160.

¹⁵ See Lothar Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, transl. P.S. Naipospos, Th. Van den End and Jan Sihar Aritonang (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994) 5, 52–60 and J.S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1988) 439.

¹⁶ For an example of how some German missionaries conceived of *adat* and the *gondang* tradition, see Gustav Pilgram, 'Referat über heidnische Musik und Tanz [Paper on Heathen Music and Dance]' (1885), transl. Lumbantobing in *Parsorion (Riwayat Hidup) ni Missionar Gustav Pilgram dohot Harararat Ni Hakristenon di Toba* (Pematang Siantar, 1981). Although Pilgram could not tolerate *gondang-tortor's* association with spirit belief, he acknowledged and approved its social function. In this he disagreed with those who sought its destruction.

¹⁷ Many Toba Batak people resisted the colonial government and the proselytising activities of the church by forming traditional religio-political organisations known as *Parmalim*. See Philip O.L. Tobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God* (Amsterdam: South and South-east Celebes Institute for Culture, 1963) 27. Members of the *Parmalim* at Hutatinggi, Laguboti, one of the organisations that survives in the modern world, still persist in upholding their ancestral belief system and its practices.

articles were in tune with the present Order of Discipline of the HKBP and the GKPI, marked the early reconciliation of the Protestant church and traditional *adat*. Nonetheless, the legacy of the missionaries persisted and the three categories—the pro-Christian, anti-Christian and neutral—are clearly distinguishable in the 1952, 1968 and 1987 Orders of Discipline, even as prepared by Toba ministers.

Scholars paid little attention to *adat* until about three decades or so after the publication of Vergouwen's book *The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of North Sumatra* (1933). From the late 1950s *adat* began to attract scholars' attention in books, articles and monographs.¹⁸ *Adat* was also introduced as a topic for church seminars.¹⁹ Today, *adat* remains a social issue that attracts discussions by many local and foreign scholars, *adat* practitioners, and ministers. Often these discussions in local newspapers and magazines become quite polemical.²⁰

What, then, does *adat* mean to contemporary Protestants? It is, indeed, difficult to answer this question, since *adat* does not imply fixed rules, perceptions, or laws. In a sense meaning, function and practice remain the same for those who still care for the survival of the pre-Christian Toba *adat*. However, in contemporary Protestant Toba society, people have an option as to whether or not to practise *adat*; it is not an absolute obligation but a matter of personal choice.

To some, *adat* is no more than a collection of old-fashioned and annoying habits. Having regard for Christian teachings, they may select certain elements of *adat*, or add things to it. They may also remove or change some elements of *adat* to make it more compatible with Christianity. *Adat* practitioners who profess to be Christian feel that they must concern themselves with Christian values when practising *adat*. They also have to face the church's Order of Discipline that regulates their *adat* practices and especially the *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor*. Failure to obey the Order of Discipline may incur disciplinary action. The Order of Discipline has essentially become a new *adat* for them.

Some people feel that many aspects of *adat* which developed centuries ago are no longer compatible with contemporary urban life.²¹ As a result, they have dismissed some *adat* practices while practising others, but in a shortened form. For example, ceremonies that formerly took a few days to perform are now completed in a single day.²² Many host pre-funeral ceremonies (*saur matua*) but use brass band music instead of *gondang sabangunan*. Some refuse to perform

¹⁸ See for example, Tobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief*; Edward M. Bruner, 'The Toba Batak Village,' *Local, Ethnic, and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia: A Symposium*, ed. G.W. Skinner (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Cultural Report Series, 1959) 52–64; R.P. Tampubolon, *Pustaka Tumbaga Holing* (Pematang Siantar, 1964); N. Siahaan, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Batak* (Medan: C.V. Napitupulu & Sons, 1964) and Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*.

¹⁹ For example, the 'Seminar Adat di H.K.B.P.' which took place in 1968, 1976 and 1977.

²⁰ Polemical articles that discuss the practice of contemporary *adat* can be found, for example, in the monthly magazine *Bonapasogit*, published by the Toba Batak community in Jakarta. See No. 2 (October 1989), No. 8 (April 1990), No. 9 (May 1990), No. 10 (June 1990), No. 11 (July 1990), No. 39 (July 1993), No. 53 (September 1994) and No. 57 (January 1995).

²¹ See the article 'Adat Perkawinan Batak dan Kepercayaan Pra Kristen [Batak Wedding Ceremony and Pre-Christian Belief System],' *Bonanipinasa* 2.12 (1990): 20–22 and 'Mengembalikan Adat Batak, Pekerjaan yang Sia-sia [Restoring *Adat* Practice to its Original Form is Wasting Time],' *Bonanipinasa* 3.25 (1992): 20–21.

²² The Rector of the Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Mauritius Simatupang, expresses the same opinion. See 'Adat perkawinan Batak dan Kepercayaan Pra-Kristen.'

adat feasts including the *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor*. The director of the Tarutung School of Ministry, the *pendeta* Hutaauruk, unconditionally rejects the *dalihan natolu* (one of two ancestral kinship units), the exhumation of bones and pre-funeral ceremonies and the use of the *gondang*, *tortor*, and *ulos* (ceremonial shawl) for these ceremonies. To him, the *adat* and its practices are evil and Christians must avoid them.²³

During my fieldwork in 1989, 1991, 1992 and 1994, I met many Catholic and Protestant Toba people living in both rural and urban areas who, no matter whether they were well-educated or not or were rich or poor, preserved and practised the old belief system and its rituals.²⁴ They do so because they believe in the supernatural power of *adat* and that its proper observance can bring prosperity, good health, and many descendants. Through *adat* they can maintain good relationships with their relatives and social group²⁵ and, most importantly, with the ancestral spirits.²⁶ They believe that *adat* protects their status within their lineages and social relations.²⁷ In addition, they do not wish to be humiliated by the accusation of being *nasomaradat* (literally, 'ignorant of *adat*').²⁸ As the church minister Gultom points out, many Toba these days profess to be Christians but still believe in the spirit world and practise spirit worship; he condemns them for asking musicians to play *gondang* pieces in the name of the Christian God while using the music to dance the *tortor* in front of a corpse, or exhumed bones, in order to attract blessings (*sahala*) from these objects.²⁹

Catholic and Protestant Attitudes Compared

The response of the Catholic church to these diverse views and practices has also been to develop a policy towards *adat*, including the practice of the *gondang-tortor* tradition. The Catholic Toba Batak church, under the guidance of the Vatican Council II (1962–65), has unified its response to *adat*, and that response has been implemented through the inculturation process. Inculturation involves using local culture as a tool to communicate the Gospel, but it does not provide Catholic Bataks with guidance on how to perform their own music and dance in the

²³ J. R. Hutaauruk, *Kemandirian Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993) 9–30ff. Further comment on *adat* can be found in Hutaauruk's book *Adat Batak* (1996, n.p). The book was published in Tarutung but is for 'internal' (probably church) use only and cannot be purchased in bookshops.

²⁴ The same situation prevailed about thirty years ago. According to Bruner, all segments of Toba Batak society—including medical doctors, professors, farmers, linguists, poets, and even Christian ministers—performed exhumation of bone ceremonies and *tugu* feasts to the accompaniment of the *gondang sabangunan* and *tortor* during the 1960s. See Bruner, 'Megalith, Migration and the Segmented Self,' 137. See also D.P. Tampubolon, 'Upatjara Mangongkal Holi di dalam Transisi untuk Menjadi Suatu Manifestasi Penghormatan Orang Tua yang Bersifat Komemoratif [A Holy Ceremony in the Process of Becoming a Commemorative Manifestation of Respect for Parents],' unpublished paper presented to the 'Seminar Adat di H.K.B.P.,' Pematang Siantar, 1968, 1.

²⁵ The same opinion is also put forward by the HKBP *pendeta* (priest) B.T.P. Purba in the article 'Orang Batak Kristen Mengalami Krisis Identitas [The Christian Toba Batak Experienced Identity Crisis],' *Bonanipinasa* 2.10 (1990): 18–19.

²⁶ See also Ch.P. Silalahi-Hutapea's article 'Pesta Tahunan di Silahi na Bolak [The Annual Ceremony at the Village of Silahi na Bolak],' *Bonanipinasa* 5.53 (1994): 17–18; and an article entitled 'Pembangunan Tugu, Apa Salahnya? [What is Wrong with Erecting Monuments?],' *Bonanipinasa* 1.2 (1989): 47.

²⁷ See the article 'Jangan Sampai Melunturkan Nilai-Nilai Filosofis [Avoid Contamination in Philosophical Values {of Adat}],' *Bonanipinasa* 2.10 (1990): 13.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion about ignorance of *adat*, see the article entitled 'Nasomaradat,' *Bonanipinasa* 5.53 (1994): 16.

²⁹ H. Gultom, *Penggalian Tulang-Belulang Leluhur (Mangongkal Holi) Tinjauan dari Segi Iman Kristen [The Exhumation of Ancestral Bones from a Christian Perspective]* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1991) 35–46.

celebration of their traditional culture. Nor should one exaggerate the degree of inculturation that has taken place. Only one Catholic church—at Karangsari in Pematang Siantar—has ever owned a *gondang* ensemble with temporary musicians. Some Catholic churches do incorporate the *gondang* into their music liturgy, but only in celebration of special festivals such as Easter Thanksgiving or Christmas, not at every Sunday service.³⁰ Some Catholic churches never include the *gondang* in their liturgies.³¹ Nonetheless, the attitude of the Catholic Church is very different from that of the Protestant Church, perhaps because the Catholic church came later to the Toba Batak (the Dutch colonial government allowed Catholic missionaries of the Dutch Capucins to open a mission at Balige in 1933)³² and after the establishment of the Batak Protestant Christian Church, the HKBP, in 1930. The Catholic missionaries never chose to ban the *gondang-tortor* tradition: some missionaries at Samosir even used *gondang-tortor* for church feasts as early as 1940 and 1952.³³

To the best of my knowledge, the Catholic Toba church has never devised regulations as to how the Catholic Toba community should employ *gondang-tortor* tradition in its social life. When *gondang* and *tortor* are performed in *adat* feasts, for example, the church does not prohibit musicians and participants from following the pre-Christian rules and procedures of *gondang* performance. This was evident when I attended an exhumation of bones ceremony performed by a Catholic family at Palipi, Samosir in 1989. A Catholic priest opened the ceremony by conducting a service, including hymn singing, prayers and a sermon. After the service, the priest allowed participants to follow the local rules and procedures for performing the exhumation of bones ceremony and the *gondang-tortor*. I saw the host give betel nut and meals to the musicians before they played the *gondang* (the *manggalang pargonsi*). I also witnessed musicians performing the series of *gondang* pieces required for the opening of a performance (the *panjujuran gondang*). The host requested that the musicians should play some *gondang* items in honour of the ancestral spirits and call for spiritual blessings on the performance (the *mangalap tua ni gondang*). During the *gondang* and *tortor* performance, the host sacrificed a buffalo and shared the meat amongst the participants. None of this was considered problematic.

The Protestant church disagrees with inculturation and has never used traditional elements in church liturgy, only in church functions or celebrations: no Protestant church has ever acquired a *gondang sabangunan* ensemble let alone a group of *gondang musicians*. The church's equivocal and ambiguous response to the diverse views and practices of *adat* can be found reflected in the attitudes of its congregants. There is implicit agreement that prior to any *adat* event, including *gondang* and *tortor* performances, it is necessary to 'Christianise' (*dikristenkan, dikuduskan, diinjilkan* [BI]) the event by presenting a sermon and offering prayers. However, it is not always made clear which specific aspects of *adat*, music and dance must be Christianised. Moreover, there is no common agreement about who is responsible for the Christianising.

³⁰ Interview with Father Benjamin Purba (Director of the Liturgical Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Medan) of Karangsari, Pematang Siantar, December 1994.

³¹ Or very rarely. Interview with Nainggolan, a *sarune* player and member of the Catholic church at Jalan Pancing/Durung, Medan.

³² P.B. Pedersen, *Batak Blood and Protestant Soul: The Development of National Batak Churches in North Sumatra* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1970) 142.

³³ See Budi Susanto, *Words and Blessings: Batak Catholic Discourses in North Sumatra*, PhD thesis, Cornell University (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989) 53, and Yoshiko Okazaki, *Music, Identity, and Religious Change among the Toba Batak People of North Sumatra*, PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1994: 183–84.

Another problem is that the Protestant Toba communities adhere to a range of views regarding the meaning of the term 'Christianised.' Some Protestants define it as a consistent method of transplanting Christian values into *adat* practice; by 'practice of Christian values' is understood first and foremost that parishioners show moral responsibility to their church. However, this view is interpreted differently on different occasions. Sometimes it is said that *adat* performances are allowed as long as they open and close with Christian prayers or hymns; others maintain that all aspects of *adat* that suggest animism are forbidden. Other views fall in between these extremes. As these divergent views are put into practice, the line between the practice of *adat* and Christian teachings becomes impossible to draw and many aspects of *adat* practised by church-goers at present still represent the tenets of spirit belief, despite the prohibition of the Order of Discipline. Residues of 'paganism' may be found, for example, in speeches, performance structures, dance movements, the stated purpose of a ceremony, ceremonial gifts, and the titles of *gondang* pieces.

The Protestant church allows its members to exhume their ancestral bones, but as a commemorative event at which practitioners must obey church law, not as an act of spirit worship. *Gondang* and *tortor* may be performed to strengthen family and social relationships, not as tools to honour the ancestral spirits. When I attended the exhumation of bones ceremonies held by a Protestant family at Hutaraja, Sipaholon in 1994, the process of digging up the bones was executed without the *datu* (traditional medicine man).³⁴ The host hired a brass band ensemble to accompany the process of unearthing the bones and the musical items performed were Christian hymns and Batak popular songs. The unearthed bones were put into boxes and kept in the church, having been brought from the graves to the church without musical accompaniment. In the church, all the bones were placed on the floor in front of the altar. Before removing the bones from the church, the minister led a Christian service, including sermon, prayers and hymn singing to the accompaniment of the brass band. When members of the host's party transferred the bones from the church to the front of the host's house, the brass band again performed Batak popular songs. The boxed bones were placed on a table whereupon the host and relatives danced the *tortor* around that table while the band played Christian hymns. However, the day after the bones were transferred to their *tambak* (tomb), the host gave a family feast in which *gondang* and *tortor* were performed. In the same year I also attended an exhumation of bones ceremony held by a Protestant family at Medan. There was no *gondang* music during the process of digging up the bones, and a church minister led a Christian service. The bones were transferred from the grave directly to the church. The host gave a family *adat* feast, in which *gondang* and *tortor* were performed, yet no bones were placed in the arena where the participants of the feast danced the *tortor*.

The divergent interpretations of 'Christianisation' and the varying degrees of importance attached to *adat* lead to diverse understandings of what the *gondang-tortor* tradition means. To some it is simply synonymous with 'heathen.' To others it means nothing more than an enjoyable tradition of dance and music. Still others perceive it as an aspect of identity, a heritage which must be acted upon. Hosts who employ *gondang* musicians to play in *adat* feasts also hold to a wide range of views about specific details, such as how long a *gondang-tortor*

³⁴ For a discussion of the role of the *datu*, as repository of religious knowledge and authority, in inducing most pre-Christian *gondang sabangunan* performances, see Purba 'Adat ni Gondang' 76–78.

performance should last, how it should begin and end, what rules of performance should be followed, and how *gondang* musicians should be treated and compensated for their work. Their views also vary about what should be conveyed in *adat* speeches (*hata ni gondang*), who should be addressed in *adat* speeches, which titles should be given to *gondang* pieces, and how the guests at a ceremony should behave when dancing the *tortor*.

***Gondang-tortor* in Contemporary Protestant *Adat* Ceremonies³⁵**

*a) Betel Nut Versus Remuneration: The Invitation Ceremony to Gondang Musicians to Play (Manggalang Pargonsi)*³⁶

According to pre-Christian rules for performing the *gondang*, *adat* feast-givers who wish to have a *gondang* performance must first appeal to the *gondang* musicians and, while conveying the invitation to play at the event, present the musicians with some betel nut. Before the *gondang* performance takes place, feast-givers must also serve a meal to the musicians and explain the purpose of the feast. In return, the musicians must utter a ritual prayer, which conveys the purpose of the ceremony to the deities. In this way, the feast-givers actually revere the *gondang* musicians and confirm the musicians' role as mediators between the human participants and the supernatural powers. The presentation of betel nut confers great honour on the musicians, who reciprocate by performing their role as mediators in *adat* ceremonies.

At church functions, as one might expect, *adat* rules are never regarded as being more important than church law. The church does not recognise the *gondang* musicians' religious function as mediators or accord them higher status. None of the organisers of church functions I attended ever performed the ritual of the invitation with betel nut presentation. It is the task of the so-called *panitia pesta* (feast organiser or feast committee), which is part of the church's entertainment division (*seksi hiburan* or *seksi gondang*), to invite the musicians.³⁷ The invitation is usually made by visit or simply by phone; the musicians are located through an advertisement or business card. Usually it is only the fee that is negotiated since musicians now commonly receive financial remuneration for their services. However, neither did the organisers of the *adat* feasts I attended perform the ritual of the invitation with betel nut presentation, preferring the simpler methods of a phone call or a visit to negotiate the date and the fee.³⁸

Many hosts choose to pay musicians as it is easiest and more efficient. Most importantly, it does not have any pre-Christian *adat* connotations. Some musicians agree with this and consider *gondang* performance in both *adat* and non-*adat* feasts to be a business matter.³⁹ Accepting an invitation to perform the *gondang*, which may only happen once a month, means gaining an income. Thus, in many communities *adat* invitations have lost their social and religious

³⁵ The re-routing of ritual prayers (*tonggo-tonggo*) and speeches (*hata ni gondang*) is the subject of a separate study.

³⁶ For a discussion of the rules relating to pre-performance invitation, see Purba 'Adat ni Gondang' 78–9.

³⁷ The terms *panitia* and *seksi* do not belong to the local dialect, nor are they comparable to the terms *hasuhutan* or *suhut* (that is, the people who host *adat* feasts). Probably the Indonesian word *panitia* began to be used widely before the 1940s.

³⁸ The family hosting the three-day pre-funeral ceremony I attended in Medan in 1991 were members of the HKBP. The family hosting the exhumation of bones ceremony at Hutaraja, Sipaholon were members of the GKPI.

³⁹ As, for example, my *gondang* musician informants in Medan: Nainggolan, Faber Napitupulu, Roy Sagala, Sarikawan Sitohang, Marius Sitohang, Posman Sipangkar and Halomoan Sipangkar.

meaning. The musicians themselves cannot make the feast-givers invite them according to the rules of *adat*, even though many would like to be shown respect in this way.⁴⁰ Some musicians, particularly those in rural areas, still see the invitation ceremony as a religious observance and never agree to perform *gondang* at *adat* feasts unless the hosts first invite them with betel nut and serve them a meal before the performance. This is irrespective of the hosts' religious affiliation and of any cash remuneration offered to them.⁴¹

b) The Manjujur Gondang Versus Christian Practice: Beginning a Gondang Performance.

Offerings (*harbue santi*) served by feast-givers to musicians before a *gondang* performance are meant to convey the purpose of a ceremony to the supernatural powers. In return the musicians must then deliver a ritual prayer (*tonggo-tonggo*) and perform a musical ritual prayer (*sipitu gondang*, i.e. a series of [often] seven *gondang* pieces) to the deities and to the spirits of their teachers (*sahala guru*).⁴² Through these ritual prayers, musicians convey the host's requests and ask for protection from disturbance by evil spirits during the performance. *Gondang* musicians refer to these practices as *manjujur gondang* (approaching a *gondang* performance). Without them, a *gondang sabangunan* performance in ceremonial feasts is incomplete. Some Catholics in rural areas still carry out these rituals, as I have observed.⁴³

The Order of Discipline of the Protestant church forbids both the offering of betel nut and a meal to musicians and the performance of the musicians' ritual prayer or musical ritual prayer, requiring instead that *gondang* performances in Christian settings should begin with Christian practices, including congregational hymn-singing, a sermon and prayers.⁴⁴ This procedure indicates that the ceremony has been approved by the church.

Many *gondang* musicians disregard this prohibition. Amani Bunga⁴⁵ told me that musicians regard the offering of *harbue santi*, and especially the presentation of the series of seven *gondang* pieces, as an indispensable religious observance. Some musicians, as they finish setting up for the performance, play one, two or three *gondang* pieces, as if warming up.⁴⁶ An informant, Marsius Sitohang, explained that it may indeed be true that this is what they are doing.⁴⁷ But it may also be that they are performing a musical ritual prayer for their own sakes. *Gondang* musicians believe that this musical ritual prayer will protect them from evil spirits. They may cut the prayer short and, to avoid being criticised by the hosts, perform it secretly, as it were.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sirait, Hutaraja, Sipaholon, November 1994.

⁴¹ Interview with Amani Rospita Sinaga (Palipi, July 1989), Amani Bunga Sinaga (Palipi, July 1989 and October 1994) and Kalabius Simbolon (Pematang Siantar, June 1992 and Medan, December 1994).

⁴² For a discussion of the structure of the *manjujur gondang* and of related rules, see Purba, 'Adat ni Gondang' 88–94.

⁴³ At an exhumation of bones ceremony I attended at Palipi in 1989 and in the healing ceremony at Paraduan village Samosir in 1990 described by Gultom. See N. Roselina Gultom, Suatu Studi Deskriptif dan Musikologis Upacara Gondang Saem di Desa Paraduan, BA thesis, Fakultas Sastra Universitas Sumatera Utara [Medan], 1990.

⁴⁴ This requirement is recorded in Section III, Article No 6b, of the current Order of Discipline of the HKBP (see *Ruhut Parmahanon dohot Paminsangon di Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* [Tarutung: Kantor Pusat HKBP, 1987] 27), and in Section XII, Articles Nos. 1 and 3 of the current Order of Discipline of the GKPI (see *Hukum Siasat Gereja* [Pematang Siantar: Kantor Pusat GKPI, 1982] 20–21).

⁴⁵ *Gondang* musician, interviewed at Palipi, July 1989 and October 1994.

⁴⁶ This certainly occurred when the *gondang* musicians arrived early in the evening of the second day of the three-day pre-funeral ceremony in Medan. As the musicians finished setting up their ensemble, they played three *gondang* pieces, but no one danced the *tortor*. I did not ask them why they did this.

⁴⁷ Interview with Marsius Sitohang, Medan, 1994.

Many musicians informed me that they always do this, or at least pray silently to the spirits of their teachers.⁴⁸ Some of my informants are followers of the traditional religious organisation known as Parmalim; others are Catholics. They all say that they must be responsible for their own religious beliefs. *Gondang* musicians, however, will not perform their musical ritual prayer openly unless members of the *suhut* (feast-givers) party first give them an offering (*harbue santi*).⁴⁹ I found this issue to be a serious hidden conflict between *gondang* musicians and some Protestants who practise *adat*.

c) *The Manutup Gondang: Closing Ceremony in a Gondang Performance.*

The *manutup gondang* (closing ceremony) is the last section of a *gondang* performance.⁵⁰ Traditionally, *gondang* musicians complete a *gondang* performance in the same way that they start one. Thus they would perform a series of seven *gondang* pieces (*sipitu gondang*) after accompanying the last *gondang-tortor* sequence, which is usually requested by members of the feast-giving party. No further *gondang-tortor* sequences could then be performed. The seven *gondang* pieces at a closing ceremony were intended as a form of worship to thank the supernatural powers and the *sahala guru* for their guardianship during the performance.⁵¹

The Protestant church requires that its congregations close every *gondang* performance—whether in the context of *adat* or non-*adat* feasts—with Christian practices. All *gondang* performances at church functions obey this injunction. However, not all *gondang* performances at *adat* feasts do. At the exhumation of bones ceremonies in Medan and in Hutaraja, Sipoholon, members of the *suhut* party performed the last *gondang-tortor* sequence complete with its three-part structure and ended in the traditional way by shouting the word '*horas*' three times.⁵² At other times, I witnessed a mixing together of a predominantly Christian ritual with *adat* speeches, but no *gondang sabangunan* performance. Thus we may say that the *manutup gondang* is now optional since both *adat* and Christian practices are included in many *adat* feasts. Some of the old practices are retained but are assigned new meanings as parishioners express both their moral responsibility to the church and their respect for *adat*.

d) *The Mambuat Tua Ni Gondang: Calling For Blessings on a Gondang Performance*

Some people still believe that the first presentation of *gondang-tortor* sequence at *adat* feasts (*mambuat tua ni gondang*) attracts good fortune and blessings (*tua*) from the supernatural powers for the *tortor* performers.⁵³ This particular event takes place only once, after the musical ritual prayers of the *gondang* musicians. As the hosts, the members of the *suhut* (feast-givers) party normally take this first turn at dancing the *tortor* and call for blessings on the event for their own benefit. Advice and blessings are bestowed on them by a medium, such as a member of

⁴⁸ Interview with Sariat, Hutaraja, Sipaholon, November 1994.

⁴⁹ At the exhumation of bones ceremony in Medan, which began with the singing of Christian hymns and a prayer, the host dispensed with the presentation of the offering ritual and the musicians similarly dispensed with the presentation of verbal and ritual prayers.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the structure and function of the *manutup gondang*, see Purba, '*Adat ni Gondang*' 99–100.

⁵¹ Interview with Amani Bunga Sinaga, Siupar village, Palipi, September 1994.

⁵² *Horas* is the term to describe peace; it is also an expression meaning 'happiness' that is used to end an event at *adat* feasts. See Purba, '*Adat ni Gondang*' 98.

⁵³ Interview with Marsius Sitohang, Medan, 1994.

the host party who becomes possessed by spirits during the *gondang* presentation.⁵⁴ Participants in each of the three ceremonies under discussion in this article included this ritual, but called it by another name—the *gondang suhut*—possibly because the use of a different term does not expose the connotation of paganism as explicitly. Nowadays, the *gondang suhut* is performed for different purposes: to strengthen family relationships, to ask blessings from God (or other supernatural powers) and to show adherence to Christian practices. The purpose of the ritual remains the same; the difference lies in the object of worship. Central to traditional practice is the worship of deities, ancestral spirits or other supernatural powers, in which spirit possession constitutes the main component. Central to Christianity is the worship of the one God (Amanta Debata) and spirit possession is absolutely prohibited.

The performance of the *gondang suhut* at the pre-funeral ceremony in Medan demonstrated a coexistence of *adat* and Christian practice. The *gondang suhut* was played indoors and commenced early in the evening of the second day of the ceremony. The deceased lay on a single bed in the middle of the living room. The musicians set up outdoors, facing the front door of the house. The *suhut* party, including its *boru* (wife-receiver) members, stood surrounding the deceased. Some neighbours sat around, indoors and outside. The participants were not limited to the family of the male descendants of the deceased, but also included his female descendants. They all wore casual dress but with the *ulos* over their right shoulders.

When the musicians performed the *Gondang Mula-mula* (the compulsory first piece in the main *gondang-tortor* sequence) members of the *suhut* party responded by bobbing their bodies (*mangurdot*) to the rhythm of the music. They refrained from performing the *mangondasi* (a movement to ask blessings from the deceased), since this is forbidden by the Order of Discipline. Nevertheless, they performed the *marsomba* (honouring) gesture while facing the deceased, thus actually worshipping the deceased via this gesture. Mostly, the *tortor* movements used in the following *gondang* pieces resembled those used in the first piece (*Gondang Mula-mula*): the *mangurdot* and the *marsomba*. However, during the presentation of the *Gondang Liat-liat* ('*Gondang* for dancing in a circular motion'), a traditional *adat* exchange of blessings took place as the married male descendants (the *hula-hula* party) of the deceased placed the *ulos* on the shoulders of their married sisters (the *boru* party). In return, the *boru* party touched the lower jaws (*maniuk*) of members of the *hula-hula* party to show respect.⁵⁵ During the *Gondang Sibane-bane* ('*Gondang* of graciousness'), members of the *suhut* party bestowed blessings on a childless daughter and son-in-law by touching their heads and placing *ulos* on their shoulders, thus requesting that the couple bear offspring in the days to come.

e) Tortor, the Ceremonial Dance

Some ceremonial symbols used at *gondang* performances in pre-Christian times persist in contemporary *gondang-tortor* performances. These symbols include the delivery of *adat* speeches (*mandok hata*), the use of symbolic gestures during the dancing of *tortor*, the exchange of ceremonial gifts and the three-part structure of the main *gondang-tortor* sequence.

⁵⁴ I observed this calling for blessing ritual at the *gondang* performance in the exhumation of bones ceremony hosted by a Catholic family at Palipi in 1989.

⁵⁵ As permitted by *adat* (they may not put their hands on the heads of members of their *hula-hula*). See J.P. Sarumpaet, *Kamus Batak Indonesia* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 1994) 256.

Okazaki correctly maintains that even though every *adat* ceremony has a certain purpose to achieve, constituent elements of each are more or less the same.⁵⁶ One element which is always included is the ceremonial dancing, or *tortor*. However, only some *tortor* movements are permitted by the Protestant church, namely the *maniuk*, the *marsomba*, the *manolopi* and the *mamasu-masu* (movements that traditionally accompanied the giving and receiving of ceremonial gifts).⁵⁷ Dancers are usually familiar with the meaning of these movements and know how and when to perform them. The church expressly forbids the *mangondasi* (or *manahui*), a very common movement at pre-funeral ceremonies in which dancers continually move the palms of their hands up and down (*manahui*) facing towards their chests.⁵⁸ When dancers perform these movements in front of a corpse, they are asking for its blessings.

Despite church law, the *mangondasi* movement persists in *tortor* performances, although the movements and musical accompaniments are now more varied. I observed dancers performing this movement in front of some wooden boxes filled with human bones at the exhumation of bones ceremony at Hutaraja, Sipaholon and again at the pre-funeral ceremony held by a Protestant family at Jalan Kuda, Medan in 1994, where all descendants of the deceased performed it while dancing in circular motion around the corpse. Unlike in traditional practice however, the *mangondasi* was accompanied on both occasions by a brass band that also performed some church hymns. Participants saw the brass band as a neutral musical ensemble having nothing to do with traditional animist practices; indeed, brass bands are normally used in church liturgy. Therefore, the use of this strategy showed that they had Christianised this *adat* practice.

By contrast, participants at the pre-funeral ceremony held by another Protestant family at Jalan Mongonsidi, Medan, in 1991, refused to include this movement although they performed *tortor* to *gondang* accompaniment. Yet their dance remained religiously bound because it took place around a corpse, the female descendants danced with a sack on their heads and all the dancers faced the corpse. This strategy, like the previous one, aimed to conceal the animist aspect of the performance by omitting the *mangondasi* movement, yet retained its meaning. Thus while some Protestants refuse to employ the *gondang* ensemble but perform the *tortor* movements, others are reluctant to use the *tortor* movements but use the *gondang* ensemble. In traditional practice, the two are viewed as inseparable.

f) Performance Settings and the Use of Sound Systems

At *adat* feasts, musicians played the *gondang* on the external or internal balcony of a traditional house, or on the ground, and this practice prevails whether or not the house is a traditional house.⁵⁹ It is probable that the traditional practice will soon disappear with the demise of traditional houses in both rural and urban areas. Most Toba houses now are modern houses

⁵⁶ Okazaki, 'Music, Identity and Religious Change' 104.

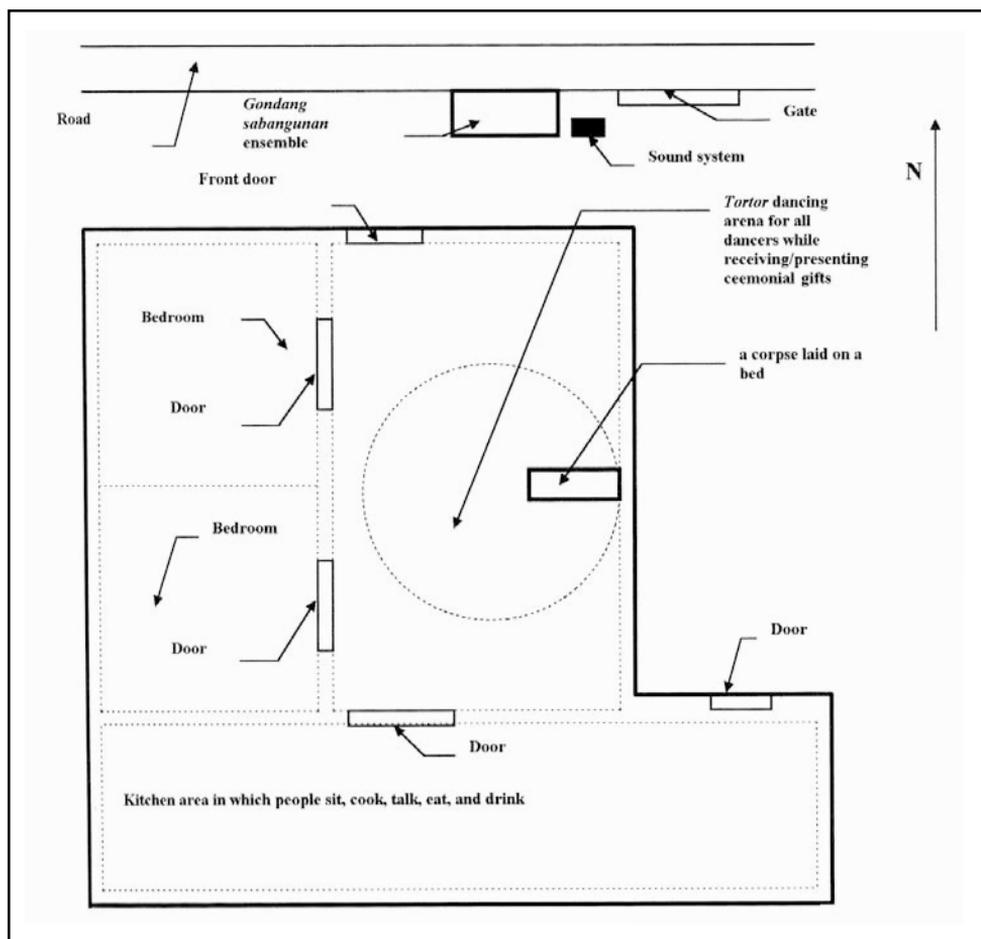
⁵⁷ For a discussion of these movements and their symbolic functions, see Purba, 'Adat ni Gondang' 82–6.

⁵⁸ See Section IV, article 6d of the current Order of Discipline of the HKBP (1987) 27.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the symbolism of the traditional house and the musicians' placement, see Artur Simon, 'Gondang, Gods and Ancestors. Religious Implications of Batak Ceremonial Music,' *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 25 (1993): 81–7. However, Simon's speculations, though convincing, do not hold true for all Toba Batak people. At Parmalim ceremonies, for example, the musicians do not sit on a high balcony, although their role as mediators between the people and the deities is accepted and understood by all participants. Interview with the Parmalim leader Naipospos, Hutatinggi, Laguboti, July 1994.

built at ground level with bricks and cement, having zinc instead of palm-fibre roofs and cement instead of timber floors. Thus, at *gondang* performances from the 1970s through the 1990s, the musicians usually played on the ground, on the floor of the home or on a stage built alongside or in front of the house. Figure 1 illustrates the setting used in the pre-funeral ceremony at Jalan Mongonsidi, Medan, in 1991; figures 2 and 3 illustrate settings of the two exhumations of bones ceremonies discussed in this article.

Figure 1. Setting for a *gondang-tortor* performance at a pre-funeral ceremony, Jalan Mongonsidi, Medan, 1991.



Although the musicians nowadays often play on a stage instead of the balcony of a traditional house, the traditional *gondang-tortor* ensemble arrangement is always observed. *Gondang* musicians are usually seated in two rows: the *gordang*, *taganing* and *sarune* players always sit together in the front row facing the *tortor* area, with the four *ogung* and the *hesek* players standing or sitting behind.

Two major agents of change in the last two or three decades, this time having nothing to do with the impact of Christianity in particular, but with the impact of Western culture in

general, are the spread of Western and Batak popular music throughout the province of North Sumatra and the introduction of Western sound systems and play-back technology. Amplification is now often added to many *gondang-tortor* performances, especially those given on the stages of halls or in outdoor courtyards. Such amplification is necessary at large-scale *adat* feasts, with several hundreds or even a thousand people in attendance. But it is not usually supervised by a professional sound operator, with the result that the sound of the *gondang* becomes unbalanced through the incorrect placement of microphones. As I have often witnessed, many musicians place one microphone or two in front of the *sarune* player but none beside the other instruments. Not surprisingly the sound of the *sarune* is therefore too loud, although many musicians and dancers tolerate this imbalance as they think the sound of the *sarune* is more important.

Figure 2. Setting for a *gondang-tortor* performance at the exhumation of bones ceremony, Hutaraja, Sipoholon, Tapanuli Utara, 1994.

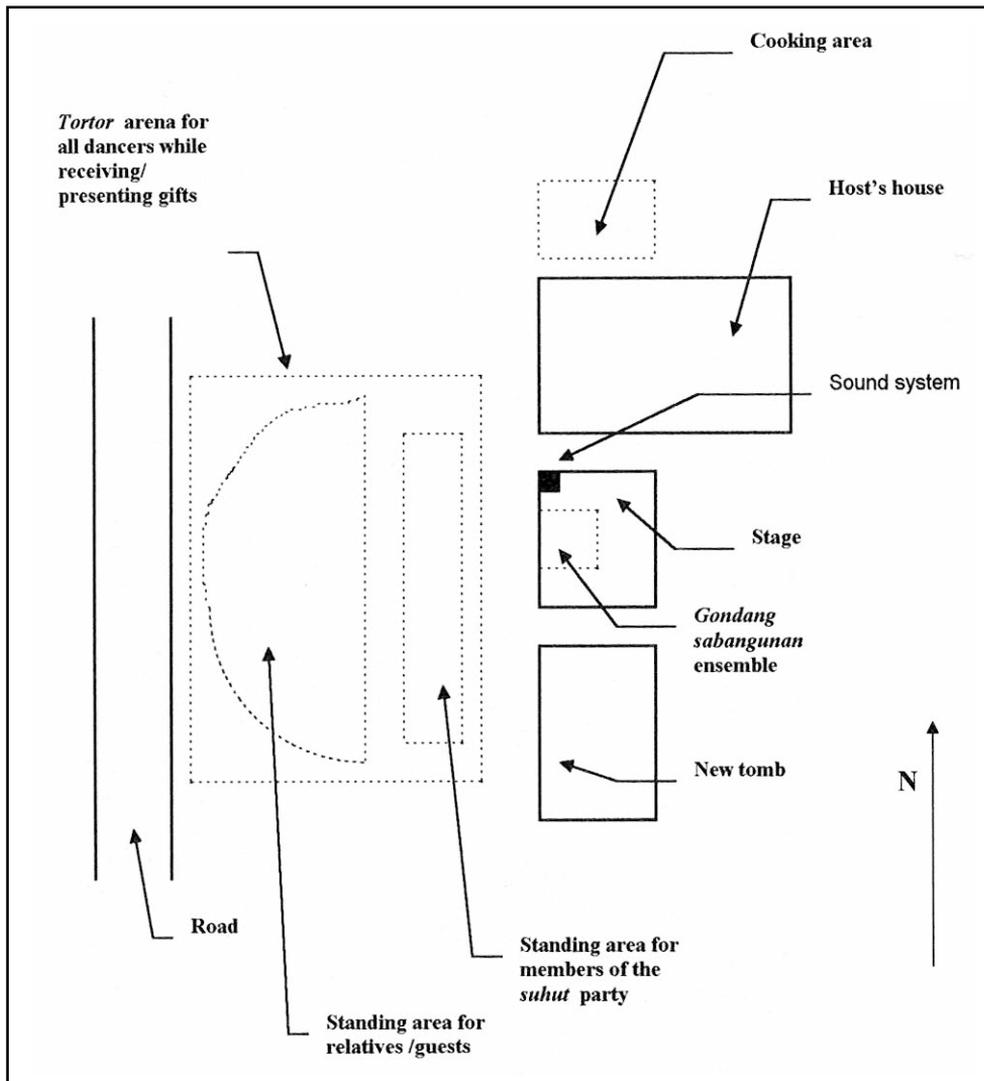
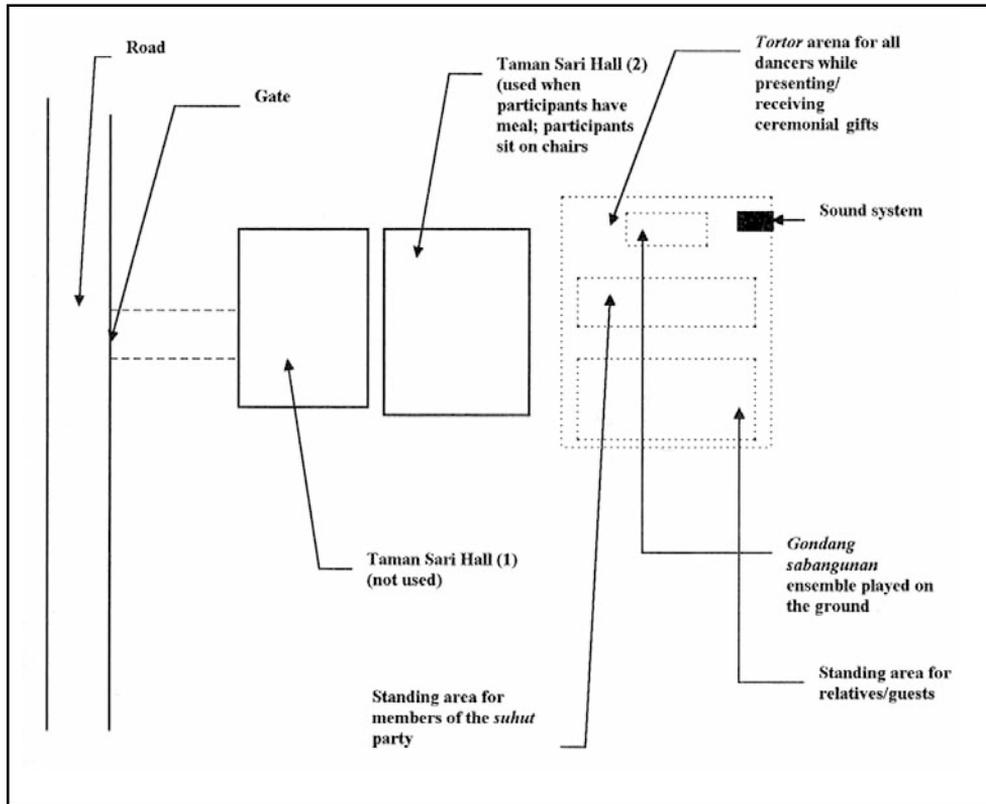


Figure 3. Setting for a *gondang-tortor* performance at the exhumation of bones ceremony at the Taman Sari Hall, Medan, 1994.



Conclusion

Over the past century, external influences such as Christianity, Western education, modernisation and urbanisation have resulted in the creation of much tension and conflict in the minds of the people with regard to the practice of *adat*. Some people no longer believe in the power of *adat*, seeing it as 'senseless' and old-fashioned, no longer relevant to modern life and incompatible with Christian teachings. Others believe that *adat* is the essence of Batak identity and assert that *adat* should be observed and ceremonially practised in order to maintain social cohesion and show respect to the ancestors. In between these two extremes comes a range of opinions through which congregants negotiate the conflicting demands of their ancestral cosmologies and the requirements and rules of the Christian churches. The results may be described as 'uneasy resolutions of practice,'⁶⁰ but may equally be viewed as evidence of a prevailing cultural pragmatism that cannot be defeated by any amount of introduced religious orthodoxy.⁶¹

The Protestant church has struggled with its relationship to *adat* (including *gondang* and *tortor*) over one and a half centuries of debate and negotiation. It has moved from a position of

⁶⁰ Aragon, *Fields of the Lord* 16.

⁶¹ Aragon, *Fields of the Lord* 7.

conflict and prohibition to a point of reconciliation that recognises that congregants have and will always practice aspects of *adat*, and therefore the church accommodates some *adat* practices. To this day the two Protestant Batak churches—the HKBP and GKPI—remain uncertain about their attitude to the *gondang-tortor* tradition. However, the Protestant church now allows its congregation to use *gondang sabangunan* in *adat* ceremonies, subject to certain constraints and rules, which are articulated in the Church's Order of Discipline.

Unlike the Catholic church, the Protestant church has not re-contextualised the *gondang-tortor* tradition by including it in special festivals of the Sunday service liturgy. Possibly this is because the Protestant church still fears the power of *gondang-tortor* to induce spirit possession. Yet the same risk should attend the liturgical use of *gondang* and *tortor* in the Catholic churches, and it has not happened. Through the Order of Discipline, the church is endeavouring to shift the function of the *gondang-tortor* tradition from an animist-religious to a non-religious, socially and culturally oriented one, while simultaneously encouraging the people to adapt the *gondang-tortor* tradition to accord with Christian teaching.

Among the people themselves, *adat* is therefore a contested idea and, for the Toba Batak as for other Christianised groups, the rethinking of ritual has become a significant cultural activity.⁶² But *adat* survives as a flexible component in an ongoing process of religious synthesis⁶³ and the *gondang-tortor* tradition remains as the musical symbol of *adat*. To practise *adat*, however, is now a matter of personal or group choice; this is one reason for the change in the attitude of many people to the *gondang-tortor* tradition. Another radical change has been the weakening of the tradition due to the negligence of many *gondang* practitioners in following the details of *adat ni gondang*, a change that nevertheless had to happen to allow the performance of the music and dance to become acceptable to the Protestant church.

Because of the moral responsibility of parishioners to follow the Order of Discipline, few Protestant-run *gondang-tortor* performances at *adat* and non-*adat* feasts now include spirit possession rituals, such as the presenting of betel nut and the serving of a meal to the *gondang* musicians; worshipping the spirits of the music teachers; playing seven *gondang* pieces; and delivering animist prayers. Christian sermons, prayers and hymn singing replace some of the earlier rituals. However, rice grain, *ulos*, livestock, money, food, and labour remain the chief ceremonial gifts exchanged by participants at *adat* feasts, and their symbolic meanings remain intact. Approved *tortor* movements are still performed when ceremonial gifts are given and received. While the *tortor* movements have not changed, the dancers' attitudes toward *tortor* performance have changed. Mostly *tortor* dancing has become less relevant, due to the dancers' fear that the church will identify it as pagan in style. Sometimes, however, the ritual dancing lacks all religious reverence; for the dominant attitude is that *tortor* is only entertainment, and therefore can be allowed simply to add artistic grace to a ceremonial occasion.

With ritual language re-routed to the Christian God, reference to the names of any of the deities, ancestral spirits, or sacred places is avoided in the title of *gondang* pieces or in the ritual speeches (*hata ni gondang*), though the actual *gondang* musical repertoire has experienced little change in the last decade. Rural and urban *gondang* musicians still use the original instrumentation and select the musical items from the traditional *gondang* repertoire because

⁶² Volkman, *Feasts of Honor* 6.

⁶³ On the politics of 'religious synthesis,' see Aragon, *Field of the Lord* 46.

the power of *gondang sabangunan* lies in its original instrumentation, musical structure and ritual context.

The tenacity of the *gondang-tortor* tradition at *adat* feasts in contemporary Toba society is due to the continuance of strong *adat* values and practices. However, the various styles of *gondang-tortor* performance show that its social function and meaning depend on the particular purpose of the ceremony in which it takes place. *Adat* and church culture have distinctly different principles and objectives. Nonetheless, both *adat* and Christianity together constitute the identities of many contemporary Toba. These two belief systems not only coexist but also influence the social and religious life of the people in equal measure. It is unlikely that the church will ever fully control *adat*, and vice versa. *Adat* and church teachings will therefore continually have to find a creative compromise to resolve the tension between them. Accordingly we can expect that the two conflicting sets of social and religious conduct represented by the *adat* and Order of Discipline of the church will continue to influence the future of the *gondang-tortor* tradition.