

THEORIES OF INDIANIZATION Exemplified by Selected Case Studies from Indonesia (Insular Southeast Asia)

by

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1. ABSTRACT

Too preoccupied with illustrating the influence of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Sanskrit in Southeast Asia most theories of „indianization“ seem to undervalue the „recipient“ cultures and societies. On account of a more or less marked „high culture-centrism“ Southeast Asian cultures and religions are measured with the classical expressions of Indian religions available in written records such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Purānas, Samhitas etc. Owing to this „high culture-bias“, these theories of indianization are insufficient to be able to explain the indianization of Southeast Asian societies as creative socio-cultural adaptations. *Conditio sine qua non* for a deep understanding of the dynamics, reasons and meanings of the indianization is a sound knowledge of Indian cultures and religions as well as an intimate knowledge of Southeast Asian societies, cultures and religions. The „anthropological approach of indianization“ advocated in this paper is illustrated by selected examples from Indonesia. In the center of interest, however, is the deification of rulers under the title *Singamangaraja* among the Toba-Batak, a tribal people in Sumatra, by means of adoption, transformation and adaptation of Indian concepts, seemingly a striking antithesis to the egalitarian structure of the kinship-based Toba-Batak society. *Singamangaraja* worshipped as incarnation of *Batara Guru* were divine kings going back to different sources of indianization, but at least partly deriving from very ancient traditions of sacral rulers.

2. THEORIES OF INDIANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Behind the concept of indianization, which a scientist – whether he may be an indologist, researcher into Buddhism or a historian specialized in the region of Southeast Asia – defends, there is always a latent corresponding theory of cultural diffusion.

Let me pass in time-lapse review some of the most important theories developed for the indianization of Southeast Asia in order to be able to judge more fairly some case studies from Indonesia in the theory-historical context.

The fact that many ethnic groups in mainland and insular Southeast Asia had been exposed to relatively intensive Indian cultural influences (see fig. 1) for a long time, was even noticed by early European visitors to this region. When the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore paid a visit to today's Indonesia, but Dutch East-India (Nederlandsch Oost-Indië) at the beginning of the 20th century, he is reported to have announced the words in view of the independent internalization of the Indian culture, „*Everywhere I can see India and I do not recognize it again!*“ Depending on which way of transmission (armed colonization, trade, specialization) or which mediators (warriors/*kshatriya*, merchants/*vaishya*, Brahmins and Buddhist monks) were to play an important part according to theory, it was referred to as the *kshatriya*-, *vaishya*- or Brahmin-hypothesis.

Unfortunately not sufficient evidence could be provided for the „*kshatriya-hypothesis*“ (immigration of Indians, war, conquest and colonization) which was defended by Indians such as Radhakumud Mookerji and the historian R. C. Majumdar dreaming of a „Greater India“. Consequently, it was replaced by the „*vaishya-*



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Figure 1: Indianization which occurred in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia

hypothesis“ according to which the most important transmitters of Indian civilization were seen as Indian traders, and a the process of indianization was viewed as a „*pénétration pacifique*“ (representatives: N. J.

Krom, G. Coedès). An objection, however, was raised to this thesis based on the fact that merchants of low origin and caste had no sufficiently extensive knowledge in order to be able to pass on the extremely complex expertise. Indianization was viewed as „**Brahmanization**“ by the advocates of this hypothesis (representatives: F. D. K. Bosch, J. C. van Leur). It is believed to have been executed mainly by Brahmans and to have been operated on the initiative of the Southeast Asian courts (Hall 1976:12-20; Bechert 1979; Kulke/Rothermund 1998:195-206; Parkin 1978:58-61). The fact that the latter thesis is equally in need of revision will be shown by the example of the Batak of Sumatra.

The French Scientist, **Georges Coedès**, who gave a comprehensive survey about the „*indianized countries*“ of Southeast Asia in his book „*Histoire ancienne des états hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient*“ published in 1944, understands by „indianization“ the peaceful propagation of the Indian culture to Southeast Asia. It started from the 2nd century B.C. and developed into a noticeable dominance of the Indian culture in many parts of Southeast Asia. In the course of indianization the „Sanskrit-culture“ (that is to say, the Indian conception of state, Indian concepts of kingship, the denominations and philosophical teachings of India, the cosmology and mythology of Purânas and the great epics, not to mention of Dharmasâstras, Hindu or Buddhist cults etc.) was brought to Southeast Asia by way of Sanskrit as one of the most important medium of language (Coedès 1968:15f; Coedès 1953:348). Coedès and his adherents insofar advocated an **one-sided diffusionism**, as they primarily attributed cultural change to cultural events of transmission, and showed a total disregard for the **endogenous process of change**. On account of the access dominated by archaeology and indology, they focused their attention on „highly civilized“ objectivations: Most of the sources which survived were made of stone (buildings including inscriptions, handicraft artifacts such as sculptures and the like, iconography) and, for the smaller part, made of metal, while the materials made of wood, bamboo, horn etc. which continued to be preferred by the majority of Southeast Asians were highly perishable. It is the former that reflect the Indian influence noticeably. The researchers focused their attention on that material „heritage“. Apart from Buddhist recorded documentary evidence, the indianized empires left behind only few written sources. Those records, for the most part, contained both reports on dynasties and „eventful stories“ tremendously biased towards Indian civilization mainly dealing with the conduct of the sovereign's relatives and religious advisors¹. In this way, Southeast Asia was only analyzed from the Indian point of view. On the basis of that „indianizing“ approach, ancient kingdoms and cultures of Southeast Asia came to be regarded as somewhat derivative (Christie 1985:2-4; Hagesteijn 1989:2)². According to Coedès, there was a principle involved: The more centralized the system of rule, the higher the extent of indianization (Coedès 1953:353). This kind of „**model of transplantation**“, working on the assumption that fully developed concepts of power, kingship and state, for instance, were transferred from India to Southeast Asia similar to a plant developing according to its local conditions, only to be modified afterwards, became increasingly discredited (Kulke 1985).

According to the above-mentioned theories, the „**indianized kingship**“ was the most essential element of indianization. This tendency was made the focal point of both the sources and its analyses and is thought to be representative of the politics in Southeast Asia. Representatives of the „New Generation“ among the

¹ It was much later that a **Historiography** taking care of objective documentation and preservation of historical events emerged in the indianized Southeast Asia. The influence of the Indian philosophy manifested itself in considerable skepticism about the deceptive reality as well as about a typically transcendental orientation. It was not the detailed account of the empirically conceivable reality but „*the crossing to the terra firma beyond*“ which attracted immediate attention. The „meta-empirical“ thinking focused on spheres beyond the world of sensory perception. Working on the assumption that all historical manifestations are tantamount to illusions gave rise to an indifference towards the recording of those „deceptive“ events which are constantly recurrent to boot, that is to say, they are far from taking on the character of uniqueness (Weggel 1989:102ff, 200-205; cf. Coedès 1953:368). It was not until the native cultures broke away from the Indian model, developing a more unshakable self-identity that a keen historical awareness had been brought about. This development reflected in the historiography resulted in the emergence of Nagarakertagama as one of the first important historical works of the Indonesian archipelago (Wang 1971:212). Moreover, it is called for special care in dealing with both the inscriptions and the manuscripts since the rulers who demanded those documents „*far more likely had in mind the projection of an image rather than the description of historic fact.*“ (Higham 1989:306)

² Even Coedès concedes transformation and adaptation to the Indian culture: „*The ancient civilization of Angkor as well as that of Java was nothing but an Indian culture transformed and assimilated by the exceptionally talented native population*“ (Coedès 1953:362; translation is my wording, H. L.)

historians and anthropologists, however, warn against turning too much attention in the analysis to the indianized kingship of Southeast Asia, since this ideology inherent in this theoretical concept, notably implying the existence of a stable monocentric political system, is liable to reproduce and to overlook the objectively working political dynamic force as a result of it. *„Despite its overwhelming theoretical complexity, however, it would be better not to concentrate on indianized kingship when studying early Southeast Asian politics. Being borrowed, Indian political terminology was used by native leaders. To legitimize their achieved power. ... I argue that we are not dealing with a single position at the top of a political hierarchy (as is suggested in the sources), but with a number of competing political leaders all striving for overlordship. Only when track is kept of the relations between these various competitors can the dynamics of their attempts be observed. Focusing on the theoretical aspects of Indianized kingship does not allow these dynamics to be detected. It is not a case of one hereditary position from which others can automatically be dominated, but rather a case of achieved positions, usually won after severe competition.“* (Hagesteijn 1989:43). Concluding from this: Instead of blindly relying on the ideology, that is, on what the sources are trying to suggest, we are bound to address the actual functioning of the political systems.

As early as 1942 the Austrian anthropologist and indologist Robert **Heine-Geldern** (b. 1885, d. 1968) underlined the **selection and adaptation of Indian cultural influences** in his revolutionary article *„Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia“* based on a political-anthropological approach. Besides, in the light of Southeast Asian advanced civilizations (Burma, Ayudhya, Cambodia, Java etc.), he tried to illustrate that Southeast Asia finally succeeded in developing a comparatively **independent civilization** by virtue of **syncretistic syntheses** despite its more or less intensive orientation towards the Indian model (Heine-Geldern 1963). His „high culture-centrism“ (centeredness of „advanced“ civilization), however, sets limits to his latest research work into the „tribal cultures“, in particular. According to this preconception „higher cultures“ (that is highly „sophisticated civilizations“) are regarded mainly as the originators, whereas „lower“ cultures (that is tribal cultures) are considered to be primarily imitators: Despite the fact that Heine-Geldern no longer reduced the tribal communities to entirely passive recipients from outside, they gave him the impression – in comparison to the “high cultures” (i. e. “advanced” civilizations) – of being the more inactive and intellectually less capable partner after all. Within this scope the active part of those tribal communities was mainly confined to the selection of and the adaptation to foreign cultural elements. This hypothesis was again connected with the frequently underlined **intense constancy (persistence) of tribal communities** regarded as ethnographic museums, as it were, which are subject to change only due to external impulses. Heine-Geldern who never considered himself to be a direct exponent of the (now already defunct) Vienna School of Historical Ethnology, however, until his death clung to the extremely **high culture-centristic perspective** going back to the tradition of the Vienna School of Historical Ethnology. Concerning the adoption of the god-kingship³ by Southeast Asian tribal communities, it can be shown that Heine-Geldern adhered to his original viewpoint, as it was, despite the sophistication of his theories and methods. As early as 1923 he maintained in a lengthy contribution of 279 pages titled *„Southeast Asia“* (German: „Südostasien“) in Buschan’s *„Illustrierter Völkerkunde“*⁴, that *„it is both (about) Singamangaraja of the Batak in Sumatra and the Kings of Fire and Water [of the Jarai in Vietnam] represent ancient remains of some sort of high cultures regressed to barbarism (savagery), but as for the Singamangaraja the derivation might positively be found among the ancient Minangkabau or Aceh empires, as for the high priests of the Jarai it might be found in Cambodia or in ancient Champa as well.“* (Heine-Geldern 1923:904; translation, slight orthographic modifications of names, and emphases are my wording, H. L.; cf. 903, 951). For 36 years Heine-Geldern defended the same concept of „**barbarization**“ with regard to the Batak of Northern Sumatra: *„Everything we said suggests that the Singamangaraja was a divine king of the sort one could frequently come across in the indianized countries: namely a king who was regarded as an incarnation of Shiva [...]. In case of the people, however, that adopted the Indian civilization merely in*

³ Obviously, both the Indian impact and the great cultural diversity in various regions of Southeast Asia eventually created concepts of god-kings whose embodiment of supernatural powers appears to differ in degree and emphasis. Consequently, McCloud (1986:94) pointed out that the *„appropriate implication of this [«god-king»] concept in Southeast Asia remains unclear, which has inevitably led to considerable controversy among scholars over the «degree» of godliness vested in the king.“*

⁴ Indeed, it was the Austrian Heine-Geldern who coined in 1923 for the first time the scientific term „Southeast Asia“.

fragments yet they had failed to appreciate its mentality; consequently this [divine] kingship fell victim to *barbarization* and it ended up being biased by native concepts. What is more, the power of the king, which is assumed to have been much bigger, diminished in the course of time” (Heine-Geldern 1959:380; cf. 398; Translation from French, slight orthographic modifications of names as well as emphases are my wording, H. L.). Heine-Geldern seems to assume a basic inability of the tribal peoples to adopt the finishing touches of the complex Indian civilization. Accordingly, those tribal peoples are capable of taking over „only chunks of this civilization” (French: *des bribes seulement de cette civilization*). In addition to this inadequate reception, there were those contacts with the Indian civilization which had been either broken off or had been deficient in such a way that the adopted concepts had become increasingly „batakized”, that is, barbarized in the course of time (Heine-Geldern 1959:398).

In the mid-fifties of 20th century the Dutchman J. C. van Leur introduced a change of paradigm with the publication of the work „*Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*“. Van Leur attempted to establish proof of the strengthening of the Southeast Asian native civilizations due to the cultural adoption from India. In this context he objected strongly to the sustained prevailing view that the Indian culture in Southeast Asia is believed to have come across a „vacuum”, as it were, and to have acted as a „prime mover” of the cultural, political and economic development. Accordingly, the Southeast Asians adopted only those characteristic features of Indian cultural life intended for a necessary complement to the indigenous system. What is more, the indigenous civilizations are thought to have given the impetus to the continual development of an independent Southeast Asian history (Christie 1985:2f; Kulke/Rothermund 1998:197f). The „indianization“ no longer came to the foreground but rather the phenomenon of the „**indigenization**“ or „**localization**“ (Kulke 1985). Coedès refused to accept this new view: From a high culture-centric and scripturalistic angle, he put forward a strong argument against H. G. Quaritch Wales’ thesis of the further development of the autochthonous civilizations in response to an Indian „stimulus”: „*Legitimate objections were raised against this theory. For my part, I already remarked that «monuments which are so different according to plan, structure, and design such as Borobodur and Angkor Vat (and equally different from any other monument of India) that they can be thoroughly explained both by virtue of the Indian mentality and Sanskrit-texts. What I find extremely difficult is to interpret them as response of indigenous Javanese or Khmeric mentality to a simple Indian stimulus; for they are too deeply imbued with the Indian way of thinking.» India yielded much more than rice: it had produced the plant which according to the soil that they grew on bore fruits of different taste.*” (Coedès 1953:367; translation as well as emphases are my wording, H. L.)

According to this above-mentioned exposition, the essential theories which were advocated in relation to indianization – with the exception of the dissertation titled „*Batak Fruit of Hindu Thought*“, an original work on Indian influences and its digestion by the Batak, which **Harry Parkin** brought out in 1975: Starting-point of his argumentation is the apparent influence on Dairi-, Karo- and Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra by Tamil traders whose presence in this region of Barus (on the Northern Westcoast of Sumatra) can be proved for the 11th and 12th century. Shivaite ideas permeated through the Batakland via these Tamils, that is, as far as to the East-coast of the Lake Toba. From this it follows that the sharp division claimed by van Leur between trade and religion, between temple and market is not related to reality. Parkin worked on the assumption that among the Tamils were a great many para-religious astrologers, fortune-tellers, healers and magicians. In this connection, Parkin offers an interesting suggestion that the recent *Mantirikam*-literature of Southeast India, which is known to be a modern manifestation of that centuries-old **popular Tamil religion**, should be quoted as a material of comparison for analysis of religious rituals and magic or astrological practices. For, so his argument goes, „**para-religious**” influences starting from the West-coast around Barus rather than **scholastic Brahmanism** are more likely to have had an impact on the Batak of the interior. Working on the observation that the magic-religious strategies and aids of the Batak seer/shaman (TB. *datu*) as well as the *pustaha* („books of spells” which contained knowledge and techniques of magic) not only reveal a strong tantric influence but also bear striking resemblance to the practices of the *Mantiravati* and „street-magicians” of Tamilnad as well as the Shivaism of *Mantirikam*-literature and the astrological manuals of Southern India. Parkin strongly objects to a high culture-centered approach suggesting a direct comparison of the culture and religion of the Batak with the classical forms of Indian religions as they are

recorded in the Veda, Upanishads, Purānas, Samhitas etc.: „*One of the circumstances which has hindered previous studies of the possible Indian-Hindu influence on Batak culture and religion has been the assumption that such influence must have stemmed directly from one or other of the classical forms of religion, such as Shaiva Siddhanta found in Hinduism. It is admitted that a direct comparison of the Batak concepts with those set out in the Veda, Upanishads, and even the Puranas, leads to a completely negative conclusion.*“ (Parkin 1978:136) Instead of this, he suggests as I would call it, an „**anthropological approach**“. A more suitable object of comparison with a view to investigate the indianization of the civilizations of the Batak is said to be the „*vulgar religion*“ of the rural and urban India, as it was mentioned above, which is deeply rooted in prehistoric Aryan traditions and is looked upon as the living religion for the majority of the population. Parkin refuses to compare, for instance, the astrological literature of the Batak with the „Brhatsamhita“ Varāhamihira`s (6th century) but with the vulgar texts on astrology which can be traced back to this. The vulgar Hindu *Mantirikam*-literature, which is based on the classical texts but those are made to „reduce“ at the same time as well as the traditional Hindu-astrology reflected in the „*Arutam*“-books, according to Parkin, are more likely to represent the Indian religion conveyed through the cultural contact rather than the „classical“ sources normally used by indologists. Despite the fact that the *Mantirikam*-literature by no means dates back to the remote past, its portrayal of the practices and the storing of knowledge are still based on a long and ancient tradition. It is therefore unlikely that the Batak obtained their concepts first-hand from this source of literature. On account of his comparison, however, Parkin can conclusively prove that **many religious-magic notions and practices of the Batak are based on the same tradition as that vulgar Hindu-religion of Southern India** (Parkin 1978:39, 134-136, 257, 262f). The main advantage of such a non-„scripturalistic“, non-high culture-centered analysis is that the notorious search for correspondences between the affected cultural as well as religious conditions of the „tribal community“ on the one hand and the once affecting „high culture“ on the other hand could be dropped. The concluding judgments of such „investigations“, which are a well-known fact, boil down to inevitably superficial cultural adoptions (Warneck 1909:2-8; Tobing 1963:17-19). According to others the borrowed fragments were intellectually incomprehensible on their part with the result that they were distorted or „barbarized“ in the course of time (Heine-Geldern 1923:903, 951; 1959:380)⁵. Apart from that, Parkin provided a model analysis of the process of **indigenization** among the Batak. By way of many examples he could prove that first the „local genius“ of the tribal community (selection, modification) was given a chance by adopting foreign cultural elements. Moreover, a synthesis of indigenous and different foreign influences beyond a simple addition occurred: „*Consequently, there has been some reconception of Batak religion and some interaction between the foreign elements themselves.*“ (Parkin 1978:28) In his view, Indian elements are far from being simply isolated by distinguishing them from exactly definable influences of other cultures (quadrangular axe-, Dongson-, Islamic Malay or Christian culture): „*... the Toba-Batak reworked and indigenized the Indian influences so that a new form was produced which within the permitted limits of Toba-Batak tradition was Batakized Indian in form and Indianized Batak in content.*“ (Parkin 1978:64)

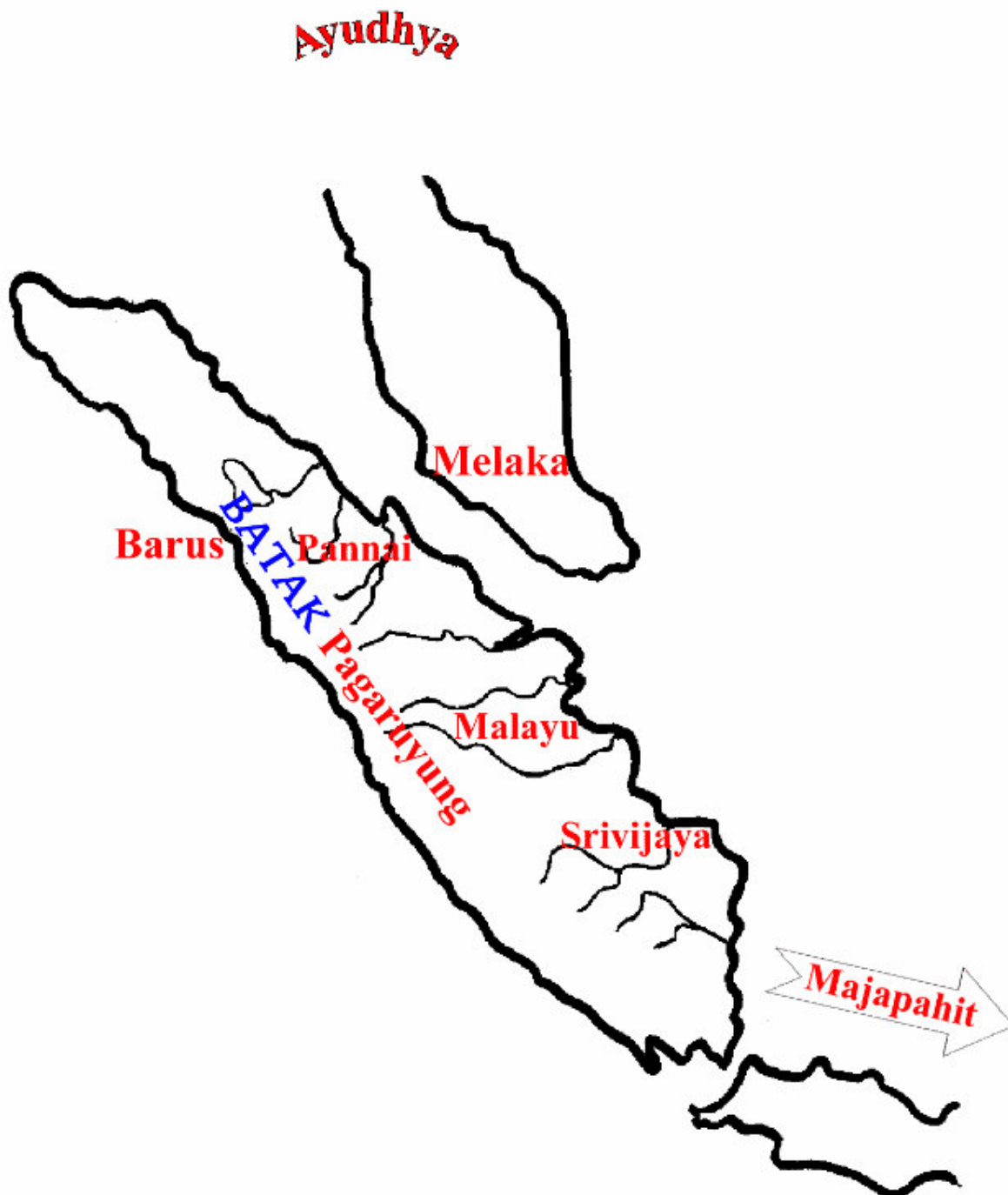
3. EXAMPLES OF INDIANIZATION FROM INDONESIA

The Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra and their institution of sacral rulers, that is to say, of the “divine king” (*Singamangaraja*) and of the „priestly kings” connected with the above-mentioned god-king (i. e. *Sorimangaraja/Baligeraja, Jonggi Manaor* and *Ompu Palti Raja*) are the focus of my attention. The fact that the Toba-Batak despite their really typical „tribal“ structure have the **political institution** of sacral rulers, which is in sharp contrast to the former social order, to all appearances may (at least partly) be put down to **cultural adoptions from the indianized empires** in the more immediate and distant vicinity (see fig. 2).

The question which still remains to be answered should be asked why these concepts were completely changed and redesigned beyond recognition? Is it due to the inability of the Toba-Batak to transform

⁵ Parkin`s well-founded knowledge of the religious conditions among the Tamil also imply an excusable shortcoming of this study which could be described as Southern India-bias: Parkin places an overemphasis on Shivaite influences starting from Southern India and tends to disregard the Javanese influences or the influences coming from Padang Lawas, Minangkabau-Pagaruyung and Malayu.

concepts adopted from the „high culture”-societies in the wake of the so-called **indianization** so that those were disfigured beyond recognition in the course of time (cf. Heine-Geldern 1959)? Or do we not rather need to search for its causes in the social structure and the world view (ideology) of the Batak themselves? As soon as the cultural adoptions are investigated in the light of the social structure and the emic perspective of



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Figure 2: Indianized empires which are both adjoining each other and those which are farther away from the Batak of Sumatra

the „receiving” (cf. Situmorang 1993a), the listing of Indian notions of kingship and state will be superseded by the evidence of an active and creative adaptation of the Indian model to the existing social order.

The assumption on which the „indigenization“ guided by social structure and ideology is based can only be verified, providing the fundamentals of the social order of the „receiving“ society and culture are known, as is the case with the precolonial Toba-Batak: Working on the hypothesis that among the precolonial Toba-Batak the kinship relations provided the basic pattern for the economic and political organization (Lukas 1999), it is required to query if and to what extent the **concept of divine kingship** deriving from a „state“- and „high culture“-context had to be transformed due to its irreconcilability with the kinship-based social structure of the Toba-Batak.

Let us turn our attention to the institution of the **sacral rulers of the Batak**. Since the 16th century there have been „divine kings” among the Batak, who held the title *Singamangaraja*. The title of those sacral rulers consists of two Sanskrit-words, „Lion” (*singa* from Sanskr. *singha*) and „great king” (*mangaraja* from Sanskr. *maharaja*) (Parkin 1978:181, 129; Heine-Geldern 1923:951, 903f). In all probability, the *Singamangaraja* continued a previously existing ancient tradition of sacral rule. According to oral traditions of the Batak, it is assumed to have been a legendary king from the „land of the setting sun” (TB. *Hasundutan*) named *Raja Uti*, who passed on to the first *Singamangaraja* the power and authority to rule. This *Raja Uti* obviously represents a pre-Islamic ruler of Barus on the Westcoast of Sumatra. Barus, which used to be called P’o-lu-shih⁶ in the ancient Chinese sources and Fansur⁷ in the Arab accounts, was already in the 2nd century A.D. an important export harbor for camphor⁸ and benzoin⁹. An inscription of stone discovered in the region of Barus at Lobu Tua (Labu Tua) proves the presence of about 1.500 Tamil merchants (Sastri 1932; Parkin 1978:51, 81-83, 106, 262f). From the second half of the 7th up to the 16th century Barus appears to have been a Batak-kingdom, which was indianized and shaped by the Hindu or Buddhist traditions respectively. It was governed by members of the Batak-clan (*marga*) Pasaribu. In those days Barus

⁶ The toponym „P’o-lu-shih“ for the camphor export harbor Barus is a derivation from the Chinese word for „scent“, that is, „p’o-lu“ (Drakard 1990:3). In the Chinese texts dating back to the Liang-Dynasty (502-557) hence the camphor was called „ointment from P’o-lu [P’o-lu-shih]“, „salve from Barus“ (Heine-Geldern 1959:384).

⁷ Barus appears as „Fansur“ in Arab sources and in case of Marco Polo as „Fanfur / Fransur / Fansur“ (Tibbetts 1971:490; Polo 1989:381f; Polo o. J.:279f). This name goes back to a small place in the North of Barus, which used to be called „Pancur“ or „Pansur“ respectively (Situmorang 1993b:59; Drakard 1990:4; Sidjabat 1983:34). Mal. (*air*) *pancur* = „cataract (with a thin jet)“ (Karow/Hilgers-Hesse 1962:277); TB. *pansur* = „a jet of water one may observe coming out a bamboo cane and falling into a swimming pool below“ (Warneck 1977:177). Since the 9th century Fansur was considered to be a source of camphor and benzoin.

⁸ **Camphor** (Lat. *camphora*), a product of the wild camphor tree (Lat. *Dryobalanops aromatica Gaertn.*), was already known in the most distant times and particularly appreciated by the Arab physicians outside Southeast Asia. As early as the 12th century the Arab geographer Idrisi reports that Sumatra exports camphor (Marschall 1968:72). Two relatively early sources from people who traveled straight through Sumatra, mentioning camphor as a typical product of the island, belong to the travelogue of the Venetian Nicolò di Conti (1419-1444 in Asia) and the „*Kitâb al-Fawâ'id fî usûl al-bahr wa-l-qawâ'id*“ (c. 1489/90) of the Arab navigator Ahmad b. Mâjid (Hall 1976:233; Tibbetts 1971:220). The camphor tree is to be found only in the North of Sumatra, that is, neither to the south of the equator nor to the north of 3rd degree of the northern latitude (Marsden 1811:149f; Junghuhn 1847 I:107f; Avé/King 1986:13, 17-19). The name „camphor“ goes back to the Sanskrit-term „*karpura*“ (Parkin 1978:110). Accordingly, Sumatra was probably referred to „*karpuradvipa*“, that is, „camphor island” by the Indians under the reign of King Asoka (Coedès 1968:19f). The Arab or Persian word *kâfûr* which the English/German word „camphor”/„Kampfer“ is derived from, goes back to the languages of Sumatra, where this article was mainly produced. The Malay term for the camphor is „*kapur*“; it is called *hapur*, *todung* or *haboruan* by the Toba-Batak living in the inland. Once the epithet „Barus“ is added to this word (Mal./I. *kapur barus*, TB. *hapur barus* = „camphor (from the surroundings) of Barus”), not only the origin of the product but also its top-quality will be expressed (Labrousse 1985:356, 495; Parkin 1978:110; Warneck 1977:107, 44, 263; Kamus Dewan 1989:99, 531). Likewise, Barus is quoted as a camphor harbor of Sumatra in the Arab sources. The Sumatranian names correspond to the Arab term *al-kâfûr al-fansûrî* (Lat. *camphora fansuriensis* = „Fansur-camphor, camphor of Fansur“, that is, Barus). Even Marco Polo refers to *canfora di Fanfur* as one of the best in the world (Drakard 1990:4; Polo 1989:381f).

⁹ **Benzoin** (Lat. *Styrax benzoin*) is an important product of collection in the hilly country of Northwest Sumatra to which the Pakpak- and Toba-Batak are indigenous.

served as a gate for Indian influences which left conspicuous marks in the language and the ideology of the inland Batak (Sastri 1932; Coedès 1968:158, 244; Simanjuntak 1977:76-79; Heine-Geldern 1959:385f; 393; Siahaan 1964:26f Tideman 1936:8f; Situmorang 1993a:18, 152, 179, 181). A sort of „ritualized trade” connected the inland inhabited by the Toba-Batak with Barus on the West coast of Sumatra. The most essential part among the offerings, which the Toba-Batak made to the rulers of Barus, were the so-called „horses of the gods” (*hoda debata*), but their colors were strictly prescribed. The Island Samosir and the surroundings of the Lake Toba used to be included in the system of the „ritual trade” with Barus. According to ancient traditions, the sultan of Barus was sent an offering in the form of a white horse by *Singamangaraja*. The Muslim ruler is said to send it to the sovereign of Pagaruyung (see fig. 2), that is to say, to the King of Minangkabau, who on his part is reported to have it sent to *Raja Uti* (Heine-Geldern 1959:387f).

Raja Uti, the legendary ruler in the land of the setting sun, who was regarded as incarnation of the god of the Batak, Mulajadinabolon, was presented a white horse of the gods. The Sultan of Barus was given a piebald horse as incarnation of the Batak-god Mangalabulan. The *Singamangaraja* received a black horse as incarnation of *Batara Guru* (see table).

Sacrificial offerings of horses made to deities of the Toba-Batak and their incarnations respectively¹⁰

| Color of the horse | Term for sacrificial horse | Deity to which the sacrifice is consecrated | Incarnation to which the sacrifice is consecrated |
|--|--|---|---|
| White | <i>hoda sihapas pili</i> | Mulajadinabolon | <i>Raja Uti</i> , that is, ruler of the clans Pasaribu in pre-Islamic Barus (via <i>Raja Hatorusan/</i> Sultan of Barus or ruler of Pagaruyung) |
| Black or white on the hips, otherwise completely black | <i>hoda silintong</i> or <i>hoda sisandangdera</i> | Batara Guru | <i>Singamangaraja</i> |
| Brown | <i>hoda na bara</i> | Soripada | --- |
| Piebald | <i>hoda sibaganding tua</i> | Mangalabulan | Sultan of Barus (Ibrahim and his successors) |

Several features of the divine kingship of the Batak both provide evidence of the indianization and of the origin as well as of the period of cultural influences:

- **Divine and holy:** The *Singamangaraja* was regarded as a god-like and holy being. The Batak horse sacrifice (TB. *mangan hoda debata*, literally: „to eat the horse of gods”) for the *Singamangaraja* corresponding to the Vedic steed sacrifice (*ashvamedha*) can be rated as a particularly unmistakable evidence of its divinity.
- **Superhuman body height:** A superhuman height was attributed to the *Singamangaraja*.
- **Immortal:** The *Singamangaraja* was looked upon as a king, „who will never die, who will never grow old” (TB. *na so olo mate, na so olo matua*). *Singamangaraja* is said to live for ever only to disappear under mysterious circumstances¹¹.

¹⁰ According to Ypes 1932:165; Heine-Geldern 1959:370, 386-388, 390-392, 394; Situmorang 1993a:154f, 166; Hoetagoeng 1926:24; Lumbantobing 1967:47, 49; Parkin 1978:163; Winkler 1925:152; Warneck 1909:26, 35; 1918:381; 1977:58, 145

¹¹ Likewise the **divine kings of Java** are said to be **immortal**: Siliwangi, the last representative of the Hindu dynasty of Pajajaran (Sunda, Westjava), did not suffer „physical” death in the battle against the Islamic army in command of Banten (1579) but vanished into thin air. Likewise Kertajaya, the last ruler of the Eastjavanese Empire Kediri, is said to be not killed but to have „disappeared”. Prabu Brawijaya, the shrouded in legend last sovereign of the Shivaitic-Buddhist Dynasty of Majapahit, is for one thing reported to have been inferior to the united Muslim assailants, for the other, not to have died in battle but to have „ascended to Heaven”. According to the prevailing notion of that time, a violent death of the ruler would have jumbled up the cosmic order (Graaf/Pigeaud 1974:53f; Moertono 1974:55; Schrieke 1955:11).

- **Omniscient:** The Batak believed that the *Singamangaraja* knows everything that is said or done. No-one dares to contradict him. In prayers the *Singamangaraja* is invoked as Lord of the region Bangkara, „whose *sombaon* (deified spirit of the ancestors) is *Sulusulu*, torch of the gods, the torch of *sombaon*, which is intended to enlighten/reveal truth as well as lies” (Pleyte 1903:47f; cf. Warneck 1909:128, Situmorang 1993a:96)¹².
- **Exceptionally powerful *sahala*:** The Batak ascribed an exceptionally powerful *sahala* (TB.: magic force/power) to the *Singamangaraja*. Whenever he passed by people, mothers would make their children’s faces turn to him with the intention to come in for his *sahala*. His *sahala* caused rice to grow but it could also be dangerous or even prove fatal. Showing no respect to him could have disastrous consequences to the fields and cattle.
- **Wondrous birth of Singamangaraja I.:** As legend has it, the mother of the first divine king, the wife of the chieftain of Bangkara was taking a bath and was about to do her hair when a *jambu barus*-fruit dropped from the sky. As a result of eating it, she got pregnant after a month passed. After three years had gone by without her being delivered of a child, her husband consulted a seer/shaman (*datu*) so as to find out the cause of that inconvenient miracle. This seer told him that the child in the womb of the wife had been fathered by the god *Batara Guru* by means of a divine fruit which the woman had eaten. The seer predicted that the child would not be born until further four years had passed by. Four years later the birth of Singamangaraja I. augured terrible thunder storms, heavy earthquake and other portents. The village was swarming with spirits and tigers hunting and tearing each other to pieces. According to custom, the placenta¹³ was buried under the house but it was struck by lightning, ascending it to heaven. The child’s father received a book of *Batara Guru*, containing laws as well as instructions concerning the calendar, the magic, the good and bad days. Right at the beginning of the book *Batara Guru* ordered the child to be called *Singamangaraja* (Pleyte 1903:5-15; Situmorang 1993a:68, 82; Lumbantobing 1967:23-31). Heine-Geldern describes those oral traditions as „a shivaitic legend mixed up with Batak elements“ (Heine-Geldern 1959:369). The portents boding the birth of *Singamangaraja* exactly correspond to Javanese notions about the birth of a king, who is equally referred to as the incarnation of *Batara Guru* (*bhattâra Guru*). The verification of this instance is based on a passage from the *Nagarakertagama*¹⁴, in which the Javanese poet Prapañca describes the frightening natural phenomena auguring the birth of the prince and the future King Hayam Wuruk¹⁵ 1334: „When our King and Lord had a rest in its mother’s womb in Kahuripan, miraculous portents indicated that it was a supernatural being. The earth was shaking, the steam was rising [from the volcanoes], the ash dropped (from the sky), the thunder was rumbling, flashes of lightning tearing the space asunder [...] This was a striking evidence of Bhatâra Girinâtha’s readiness to become the incarnation of the ruler” (quoted from Heine-Geldern 1959:370; translation and supplementations are my wording, H. L.). There is another scientific evidence to confirm this thesis of a cultural relationship between the Batak of Sumatra and Java, which is implied by the name of the birth of Singamangaraja I., **Manghantal**. The word *manghantal* means in Toba-Batak „to shake something, to make something quake” (cf. Situmorang 1993a:68, 82f) and it is undoubtedly linked with the unusual natural phenomena accompanying the birth of Singamangaraja I.

¹² It was the sacral nature of the kingship that was the widespread type of kingship in indianized Southeast Asia. Heine-Geldern, however, associates distinctive features such as the superhuman body height and the omniscience, in particular, with an ancient Buddhist tradition dating back to the 5th century (Heine-Geldern 1959:365-357).

¹³ TB. *anggina*, that is, literally „younger sibling“

¹⁴ The *Nagarakertagama* (*Nâgarakrtâgama*, *Nâgarakritâgama*, *Nâgarakertâgama*), „the history of the glorious dynasty“ written by the Javanese court poet Prapañca, a year after Gajah Mada’s death, was dedicated to the Buddhist priest and son of the „superintendent” in charge of Buddhist affairs (*dharmâdhyaksa ring kasogatan*). It is a chronicle written in verse form, which covers the history of the Empires of Singhasari and Majapahit from the beginning of the 13th up to the mid-14th century. A greater section of this work refers to the journey of King Hayam Wuruk (Rajasanagara) through his Empire (Majapahit), his visits he paid to holy shrines as well as an account of the arrangements and execution of the funeral ceremony for the Queen Tribhuvanâ (Zoetmulder 1965a:266; Soekmono 1965:39; Berg 1965:105-109; Coedès 1968:187, 240f). The Dutch „fame across” the text in the *Puri* (palace) of the prince of the Island of Lombok in 1894 (Graaf 1949:68).

¹⁵ **Hayam Wuruk** (Rajasanagara) was undoubtedly one of the most prominent rulers of the Javanese Empire Majapahit, whose regency extended from 1350 to 1389 (Schrieke 1957:314, fn. 14; Coedès 1953:364).

- **Batara Guru**, the name of the divine father Singamangaraja I: Heine-Geldern can prove that *bhattâra Guru* – was one of the most common names for Shiva (cf. Parkin 1978:160; Graaf 1949:23f; Koentjaraningrat 1990:337)¹⁶. From this we can draw the conclusion that Singamangaraja I. was respected as a **son of the god Batara Guru (Shiva)** according to the above-mentioned legend. **All Singamangaraja were hence regarded as the incarnation of Batara Guru**. In fact, a further chain of evidence is meant to support this interpretation in hand: the Batak appealed prayers to their worshipped *Singamangaraja* similar to that of a god (Heine-Geldern 1959:370). Likewise, *Bhatâra Girinâtha*, the „Lord of the Mountain“ of whom it is related in the above-quoted story about the miraculous event describing the birth of the Javanese King Hayam Wuruk, is only a synonym for *bhattâra Guru* and Shiva¹⁷. Hayam Wuruk was considered to be the incarnation of Vishnu, the incarnation of *bhattâra Guru* (*Ishvara*, *Bhatâra Girinâtha*) and the embodiment of Buddha as well (Schrieke 1957:87, 314f, fn. 14).
- **Sacrifice**: Offerings were made to *Singamangaraja* which were also offered to him in his absence. For, strictly speaking, god is assumed to be omnipresent. Accordingly, he is endowed with the capacity both to make apparitions at night and to answer to the prayers of those that sacrificed to him with the object of collecting the offerings made to him.

There is no doubt that the divine kingship goes back to striking and quite different indianizing influences mixed up with one another at different periods of time. Moreover, they gave rise to forming an integral part of the existing socio-cultural organization of the Batak. It is therefore afterwards almost impossible to find out the Buddhist and Hindu influences in the Batak civilization, in general, and those in the divine kingship, in particular.

„Hindu“ elements of the Batak culture assumed are as follows:

- The names of three Batak gods (*debata na tolu*, that is, *Batara Guru* (Maheshvara, Shiva), *Soripada* (shri Pada, i.e. Vishnu) and *Mangalabulan* (Mahakala)¹⁸
- The Batak sacrifice of a horse¹⁹ derived from ancient-Indian *ashvamedha*

¹⁶ The indologist Gonda equally emphasizes the similarities that exist between **Bhattâra Guru**, „the highest Javanese god of a later period“, and the Indian Shiva (Gonda 1975:5). The name of the deity is a compound consisting of the Sanskrit words *batara* („Lord“) and *guru* („teacher“) and can possibly be translated as „Lord Teacher“ (Gonda 1975:21f; Heine-Geldern 1923:951). *Batara Guru* did not only play an outstanding part among the Javanese, Balinese and the Batak, but was also an exceptionally popular deity in the whole cultural area. What is more, by these and similar names (Mahatala or Mahatara with the Dayak of Kalimantan, Betara in Sarawak, Lahatala in Buru, Hatalla with the Olongaju in Kalimantan, Bathala with the Tagalog of Luzon) the god was worshipped by many ethnic groups of the Archipelago (Heine-Geldern 1923:951; Parkin 1978:153, 160, 196 fn. 97). Moreover Gonda points out that *Batara Guru* (= quotation of *bhattâra Guru* in Indonesian orthography), „the typically Javanese representative of, or rather, development from, that god“, appears in several names, for instance, as Parameshvara (Paramesvara), Maheshvara (Mahesvara), Ishana (Isana), Sambhu (Shambhu), Paramashiva (Paramasiva), Jagannatha, Umapati, Nandishvara, Jagatpramana, Mahakarana or even as Rudra, that is, Bhairava, „the cruel, the atrocious being“ (Gonda 1975:3, 13, 21, 22, 24, 33). *Batara* (*bhatâra/bhattâra*) used to be in Java (and has been existent up to this day in the so-called *Agami Jawi*, the „Javanese religion“) the title placed before the name of a male deity (e. g. *Batara Indra*, *Batara Kresna*). The male *batara* faced a female *batari* (e. g. *Batari Uma*) (Koentjaraningrat 1990:337). Strangely enough, *Bhatâra* (*Batara*) used to be the commonly held title of the Kings (Graaf/Pigeaud 1974:180, 194). Similarly in „*Hikayat Hang Tuah*“, the story with its origin in Melaka (Malakka) about the Malay hero Hang Tuah, the ruler of the Javanese Empire Majapahit is given the name „Batara“ (Overbeck 1976: 174). The common application of the title „*bhatâra*“, that is, „god“, met with the kings in power is, as I see it, a clear evidence of the widespread deification of Javanese rulers in those days. On the other hand, Christie entirely disagrees to this evidence for a divine kingship. Yet he claims that this title was not adopted from the Javanese kings until the deification of the ancestors brought about by the Indian influence had become widespread. From that reason it can rather be viewed as a part of the indianized ancestral worship (Christie 1985:16f).

¹⁷ „*Sang Hyang Batara Guru is the Javanese conception of the deity Syiwa in Hindu mythology*“ (Koentjaraningrat 1990:463, fn. 5; emphasis is my wording, H. L.). **Bhatâra Girinâtha** is the „Lord of the Mountain“, that is, of the Meru (ibid, 337).

¹⁸ The commonly applied identification of the three Batak gods (TB. *debata na tolu*) with Hindu-Trimurti up to this day is scientifically untenable: On account of the evident predominance of Shivaitic elements (the major importance of *Batara Guru* etc.) Parkin regards the *debata na tolu* as a Batak version of a **Shivaitic Trimurti** or **Maheshvaramurti**. Accordingly, *Mangalabulan* is far from being identified with Brahma but rather with Mahakala, the representative of adverse, destructive and fatal cosmic forces (Parkin 1978:157, 179-184, 187).

- The prohibition to make offerings of a pig to gods of Indian origin
- The prohibition of the consumption of pork during the sacrifice of a horse
- The permanently effective prohibition on the *Singamangaraja* of eating pork and dog meat

Besides these intensive and manifold Hindu influences, however, there are only a few significant archaeological Hindu relics. By contrast, archaeological research succeeded in recovering numerous remnants of Buddhist cultures in Sumatra²⁰. Hindu influences might have entered the Batakland in at least two different periods as well as from two different directions:

1. Early stage of the transmission of Hinduism (from the 2nd century²¹ up to about the 11th or 12th century) over Barus located on the West coast of Sumatra, before Buddhism was predominant in Sumatra. The survival of *ashvamedha* among the Batak seems to refer to it.
2. Hindu influences, which reached to Batakland from the south via „Malayu-Minangkabau“ (i.e. the Empire of Malayu and Pagaruyung-Minangkabau) in the 13th and 14th century.

Buddhist features, which survived in the traditions as regards the *Singamangaraja*:

- When he was young Singamangaraja I. is said to have exhibited an exceptional kindness and charity to all of his fellow-beings. Every time he showed his readiness to pay debts of those that were unable to settle them; in addition, he redeemed prisoners put in chains due to their indebtedness or crimes, and caused them to be released. In doing so, as well as gambling he squandered a major part of his parents' possessions with the result that his relatives refused to support him in the end. According to Heine-Geldern, all these acts of charity in the Batak community of the 19th century with its „barbaric and cruel customs“ appear to be „rather foreign and out of place“. But added to this, it must be mentioned as follows: There is no doubt about the fact that kindness and charity are in odd contrast to the values of the tribal Batak community. Much more important, however, is the fact that *Singamangaraja* is granted to all without exception as opposed to the particularistic ethics of the Batak. This obviously refers to the transmission of the universal norms characteristic of Buddhism! In other words: Less charity in itself is peculiar but rather the fact that the support of *Singamangaraja* is neutral to kin-relations!
- The *Singamangaraja* walked with **bowed head**, which is reminiscent of the gait of Buddhist monks.
- As a token of his power the first *Singamangaraja* is awarded a **white elephant** by legendary *Raja Uti*. It is doubtful whether it is a clear evidence for the Buddhist influence, as it is Heine-Geldern's assumption. Admittedly Heine-Geldern's information about the significance of the white elephant is accurate. In fact, Buddha in the shape of the elephant descended from heaven on earth. However, the white elephant was equally considered to be a riding animal of god Indra at the same time, who was the supreme god in ancient Hindu-Pantheon after all. Moreover, the divine white elephant (*hastiratna*, „elephant-treasure“) closely bound up with the *cakravartin*-conception in most of the indianized empires of Southeast Asia –

¹⁹ According to Heine-Geldern, there is firm evidence for early Indian influences as regards this horse sacrifice.

²⁰ Archaeological remnants which support the indianization of the Batak by documentary evidence:

1. A stone inscription (Sanskrit. *prasasti*) discovered in Lobu Tua (Labu Tua) at Barus bears witness to the presence of a Shivaite merchants' guild of 1.500 Tamil men from South India (Parkin 1978:262-264). The settlement was abandoned in the 12th century (Kozok 1991:14).
2. The stone Ganesha of Simangambat in South Tapanuli (8th or 9th century) 56cm in height is one of the ancient Shivaite relics of Sumatra (Parkin 1978:50, 81).
3. Equestrian statues on graves of some tribal chiefs, which can be found from Dairi in the West as far as the Westcoast of the Lake Toba, bear witness to Hindu influences coming from the West coast of Sumatra (Parkin 1978:255).
4. A *naga* sculpture was discovered by Gr. K. Sidjabat in Batutanggung on Tuktuksiasu on the East coast of Samosir Island (Sidjabat 1983:374).

The Batak variation of (1) *ashvamedha* (TB. *mangan hoda debata*), (2) the equestrian fancy-dress dance (TB. *ranting*) performed on the occasion of the horse sacrifice as well as (3) the calendar, (4) magic and (5) oracle techniques could be mentioned as immaterial relics of these ancient Hindu influences (Parkin 1978:255-263). Likewise, the house and grave-decorations of the Batak (TB. *singa ni ruma* or *jaga dompak*), batakized forms of *kirtimukha* and *makara*, were adopted in an early stage of indianization (Parkin 1978:255). The lack of archaeological records, as Heine-Geldern once mentioned in passing, is certainly due to the fact that systematic excavations had hardly ever taken place in Sumatra (and in locations particularly in the northern part of the island). That is still the same today (cf. Kozok 1991:14, 15).

²¹ As early as about 150 A.D. Barus is mentioned by Ptolemaios (Kozok 1991:14).

irrespective of whether they were Buddhist, Hindu, Hindu-Buddhist²² or Islamic²³ - acted as the symbol of power and glory proper for a great King (Soen 1959:76, 78, 99f; Hagesteijn 1989:46; Zimmer 1973:118f, 127; Kemp 1969:54 fn. 27; Overbeck 1975:52-54, 67; 1976:174, 232, 255-262). It is therefore true that the white elephant can by no means be described as an exceptionally Buddhist symbol, as it is Heine-Geldern's effort. Yet it is an obvious evidence for cultural adoptions from neighboring or even from more remote indianized empires of Southeast Asia. Based on some marked details - e. g.: the white elephant; a Batak legend according to which *Raja Uti* „at present” lives in Siam; the principle of height differentiation according to which the *Raja Uti* was seated up on a high place in the roof of his house, overlooking those to whom he gave audience etc. - Heine-Geldern suggested that the *Raja Uti*-legend could be traced back to the „kingdom of Siam”, that is, Ayudhya (Heine-Geldern 1959:388-400). Other scholars even went further, claiming that the name Uti is supposed to stand for a corrupted form of Ayudhya.

Whether Buddhist influences are only confined to **Theravada-Buddhist** once, as Heine-Geldern assumes, has to be called into question, since there was a predominance of **Tantric Mahayana-Buddhism** mixed up with Shivaitic elements in Sumatra at the time of the advent of *Singamangaraja*. The Tantric Buddhism of the indianized Empire Pannai, which was located in Padang Lawas (southern Batak region; see fig. 2) must have had an exceptionally marked impact on the culture of the Batak.

The one-sided concentration on early Hinayana Buddhist influences of the Northeast coast of Sumatra led Heine-Geldern to disregard the more recent and by far more noticeable and tangible cultural effects coming from the South, in particular, those from the Empire **Pannai**: In Padang Lawas (in Batak: Padang Bolak, „great steppe“), in the stream region of the Pane- and Barumon River there used to be an important **Tantristic-Buddhist Bhairava-Shiva-community**. The strongly Javanese-molded empire, whose inhabitants, for the most part, consisted of immigrants possibly indianized Javanese, Malays of Jambi or Minangkabau, was called (according to some authors) Pannai. The Batak-clans Hasibuan, Harahap, Siregar, Dalimunte, Pulungan, Tambak, Nasution and Rangkuti seem to have settled in this region rather late between the 15th and 15 century or so. Even today twenty brick towers (*vihara*) overgrown with grass, which hardly show reliefs on the friezes to be found in the surroundings of Gunning Tua (South Tarpaulin), as well as a few Shivaitic temples bear witness to that empire. According to studies conducted by Parkin, the inhabitants of this empire concerned (or at least the ruling elite!) were made up of **Vajrayana-Tantrists**.²⁴ On account of the esoteric orientation (observance of secrecy towards the non-initiated) and the extreme syncretism it is difficult to describe the religious tendencies of the empire. From this it follows that one is likely to proceed

²² We may come across high esteem of the king's (and often „white“) **elephant** both in the indianized empires of Southeast Asian mainland (Burmese, Thai, Lao, Khmer) and in the insular Southeast Asia such as in Javanese Majapahit (Soen 1959:76, 78, 99f). The elephant was regarded as the mountain of Indra in the Hindu-mythology and he is sometimes in the possession of three heads according to myth. Triple-headed elephants have still survived as a popular motif in the art of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. The depiction of the white elephant as a rain-donor coming up in *jataka*-stories is recurrent in the titles of the white elephant belonging to the Siamese kings: „Descendant of the angel of Brahmins”, „Source of strength for producing rain“ (Soen 1959:99f). There is even documentary proof of the existence of a royal elephant (Parkin 1978:47) for one of the first indianized empires of Indonesia, Taruma (Westjava, ± 450 A.D.). Interestingly enough, the elephants played an important part in the coronation ceremonies of Cambodia, in which the king was identified with Indra (Soen 1959:5f). Similarly, in the Lao myth about the foundation of Lang Xang the demi-divine wise man, Khoun Borom, who is sent by the king of Heaven, riding an elephant descends from heaven in order to rule on earth (Hagesteijn 1989:46).

²³ The extremely rare **white elephants** were – often associated with yellow state-umbrellas – a symbol of the king's rule in the already islamized but, in fact, highly indianized Melaka (Malacca) of the 15th century. Accordingly, a white elephant endowed with magic forces chooses the new leader of the empire in various Malayan *Penglipur Lara*-stories (e. g. in the „*Raja Muda*“-tale) (Overbeck 1975:52-54, 67). This is reminiscent of ancient Indian tales, in which elephants act as kingmakers: According to that, the one who was chosen as ruler whom an elephant had managed to lift him up with its trunk and place him on its back (Hillebrandt 1923:79). Whenever the sultan sets off on a military expedition, he will mount the white elephant with the yellow „state-umbrella” put up, too (Overbeck 1975:76). According to the tale „*Hikayat Hang Tuah*” (originating in Melaka) the sultan sends at more or less regular intervals a legation from Melaka to Ayudhya, which asks for white elephants from the „*Phra Tschau*“ (*Pra pen chaou* or *Phrachau*), the ruler of Siam (Overbeck 1976:232, 255-262).

²⁴ **Vajrayana**: „diamond vehicle“, vehicle of the mystical cognitive process

on the assumption of the co-existence (1) of Tantric Mahayana-Buddhism (Vajrayana), enriched with (2) Shaktism displaying Tantric features. But, quite apart from that, this empire was known to be notorious for its Bhairava-cults. Interestingly enough, **Shiva-Bhairava**, that is, Shiva-Buddha used to be worshipped as *bhattâra Guru* in Shivaitic-Buddhist syncretism. Moreover, the Buddhist Bhairava was put on a level with the Shivaitic **Heruka**. As is the case of Malayu, Pagaruyung-Minangkabau, East Java (Singhasari, Majapahit), Bali, and equally of Shivaitic communities of India (Kâpâlikas, Kâlâmukhas, Mahâvratadharas) the esoteric teachings probably (adopted from East Java) used to be the focus of religious interest. **Bhairava**, „the Terrible“, „the Atrocious“, was reputed to be a demoniacal and destructive form of appearance of Maheshvara (Shiva). By the Batak the sinister and gloomy figure of Bhairava was adopted as a baneful spirit²⁵.

Heine-Geldern is undoubtedly right when he claims that the Theravada-Buddhism was predominant in early times (up to the 8th century). As early as the 9th century, however, Mahayana-Buddhism and Tantrism gained predominance in Sumatra. Srivijaya in Southeast Sumatra was the first center of Mahayana-Buddhism and Tantrism²⁶. As time went on, the political and religious center began to shift to the North as far as the Empire of Malayu. The Tantric Buddhism and the Bhairava cult²⁷ flourished in the powerful Javanese Empire of

²⁵ The Batak possibly recognized parallels in the cult of Bhairava to their conception of **Mangalabulan** (Parkin 1978:157, 179-184, 187) borrowed from Maheshvaramurti as a destructive and baneful deity (Mahakala). The Batak are believed to have expected all wickedness of that deity. Mangalabulan is said to be a god thirsting for power, who sows the seed of discord with the intention to be amused by it, gain more sacrifices. Moreover, he was accused of practicing cannibalism. Accordingly he is looked upon as (TB.) *mula ni parbadaan, jumadihon pormusuan*, that is, the „onset of the dispute which may result in armed conflicts“. According to Ypes, however, the Batak by no means equate the Bhairava with their deity Mangalabulan. Since the esoteric teachings and actions (drinking of blood and diabolical laughter) bound up with the cult are likely to remain inexplicable in the final analysis, they refrain from addressing the Bhairava as deity but as *begu* (spirit) and even described this supernatural being as „someone raving“ or „fool“ (Ypes 1944:139f).

²⁶ According to the Buddhist monk I-Ts'ing (Yijing), coming from China, who paid three visits to Southeast Sumatra between 671 and 689 A.D., most of the monks of about 1.500 were followers of **Mûlasarvâvastivâ**-school. In addition, there have been Sammatîyas, Mahâsangikas and Sthaviravâdins. The Yogacaryabhumi sastra-teaching of Asanga (4th century) was equally known in Srivijaya. In 717, after 40 years had passed, the Tantric Vajrayâna-teaching was spread from this very place by Vajrabodhi and his disciples Amoghavajra (Chinese: Bukong) probably coming from Sri Lanka. Inscriptions, however, indicate that representatives of the ruling elite were already around 690 followers of Buddhism mixed with Tantric elements. Descriptions of a rite during which a jug is filled with blood and complex *yantras* are drawn, seem to be preliminary stages of the subsequently rising Bhairava-cult (Coedès 1953:354f; Gonda 1975:5-8; Parkin 1978:48; cf. Gernet 1988:235-237; Kulke/Rothermund 1998:202).

²⁷ The **Bhairava**-cult linked up with magic and esoteric practices had been in existence in East Java since the 13th century and is the ritual manifestation of the syncretistic symbiosis of Shivaitic Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. This *kalachakra/vajrayana*-form of Tantric Buddhism, which took its origin in Bengal towards the end of the Pala-period and spread from that region to Tibet, Nepal and Indonesia, reached its peak in the form of syncretistic worship of Shiva-Bhairava in Java. The cult of Shiva-Buddha (who devoted himself to the redemption of the souls) fell on fertile ground in the Indonesian ancestral worship. In this Bhairavist (Tantric) tradition attempts are made to come into power in a Rimbaud-like *dérèglement systématique des sens* – drunkenness, sexual orgies and ritual murder. Kertanagara (1268-1292), the last sovereign of Singhasari, is believed to have introduced Tantric Buddhism in Java, which then was still predominant in Majapahit (Berg 1965:99; cf. Coedès 1953:360; Villiers 1965:107-110; Graaf 1949:66f; Anderson 1990:25; Hall 1976:72f). King Kertanagara attained the divine status of a Bhairava in a holy ceremony organized in 1275 (Berg 1965:331, 333, 339). According to that, Kertanagara was worshipped as Shiva-Buddha (more precisely as Buddha-Bhairava) during his life-time. What is more, he was regarded as both the incarnation of Shiva and Dhyani Buddha Akshobhya (= amalgamation of Shivaitic Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism). With the embodiment of demoniacal forces founded on this incarnation, he believed that he would be in a position to conquer hostile forces, a great many of which were existent in this *Kali*-era, and to carry out successfully his plan against the enemy's forces outside his empire. The Bhairava-rituals - during which, among other things, a sexual intercourse between the Lord of the ring (*mandala*) and the *yoginis* - were sufficient to give rise to the consolidation of the ruler's power (*sakti*): The *yoginis* were therefore chiefly considered to be representatives of magic power. First of all, princesses of amicable empires were eligible for this powerful position. Within the limits of the ring-rituals, Kertanagara begot four spiritual „daughters“ on the strength of *yoga* of the Bhairava-cult, that is, in a unio mystica manner. Those embodied the essence (*prakerti*) of four *nusantar*s, territories, namely Bangli, Malayu, Madura and Tanjungpura. Furthermore Kertanagara

Majapahit (1293 - ca. 1520). From Majapahit the Tantric Buddhism alongside the Bhairava-cult spread to Malayu, Pagaruyung-Minangkabau and Padang Lawas²⁸ (see fig. 2). In view of the clearly pronounced syncretism widespread in early Southeast Asia it seems to be more appropriate to search for indications and documentary evidence of processes of indianization as well as for close correspondences with other indianized civilizations in general:

- An amazing evidence for both Indian influences and correspondences with other indianized civilizations of Indonesia including those of the Southeast Asian mainland are, in my view, *Raja Uti*'s **seven donations** for the first *Singamangaraja* as well as the required return gifts: Despite the only partially correspondences, the seven insignia of royal power (knife, spear, turban, *ikat*-scarf, mat, jug, white elephant) which *Raja Uti* hands over to the first *Singamangaraja*, are reminiscent of the **seven treasures** (*ratnâni, sapta ratana*), which the *cakravartin*, the righteous and virtuous ruler of the world, like the great gods Indra, Agni, Soma, Rudra, or (in Buddhism) a Bodhisattva is obliged to possess. These properties are as follows: a wheel (= *cakra*, symbolizing that the King is representing the hub or the center of the world respectively), an **elephant**, a **milk-colored horse**²⁹ (= horse of the sun which is to carry the monarch on its back, inspecting the world), a precious stone (= magic jewel *cintâmani*, designed to comply with every wish expressed), a woman (= perfect royal female companion, ideal partner), a treasurer (= perfect administrator), an adviser or general (Gonda 1969:38, 60, 123-128; Zimmer 1973:124-8; Soen 1959:78). These paraphernalia of the *cakravartin* are in keeping with the royal ornament, the so-called *upacara*³⁰, that is, the Javanese insignia of royal dignity, which are intended to exert a more considerable influence, or the so-called *pusaka*³¹, the sacred heirlooms of Indonesian kings and tribal chiefs. Those objects were thought to be determined by intrinsic values of a special power/force passing over to the person wearing these items, and thus enables him to perform his royal duties in adherence to etiquette. The firm belief in that attribution even survived the islamization. Regalia (Mal. *kebesaran*), which were thought to harbor spiritual force were equally found with islamized Malays and Minangkabau. Elephants, yellow color, state-umbrella etc. used to be exclusively the prerogatives of the sovereign (Anderson 1990:17). The kings of Java and Southwest Sulawesi were also in possession of living regalia, for instance, hunchbacked people, albinos, gnomes, hermaphrodites, transsexuals (Gonda 1969:38f; Anderson 1990:27, 29). The latter is reminiscent of mythical figures (hermaphrodite, albino, girl with huge ears, egg-laying cock, unicorn etc.) demanded by *Raja Uti* and bizarre, wondrous objects which must have been seven in number! Similar to the rulers of the Javanese, Makassarese and Buginese (Southwest Sulawesi) the insignia of royal dignity were viewed as genuine subjects of the king's power and authority. The insignia of power, awarded to Singamangaraja I. by *Raja Uti* are referred to as *pusaha* in Batak. This Toba-Batak word undoubtedly corresponds to the Javanese and Malay/Indonesian term *pusaka*. In analogy to the *pusaha*, the inalienable magical heirloom of a lineage, which prove their unity and sovereignty by documentary evidence, the *pusaha* of the *Singamangaraja* used to act as a sign for his divine *sahala* (Situmorang 1993a:94) as well as a „container“ of power. The use of *upacara* and *pusaka* in Java and Sulawesi as well as of the *pusaha* with the Toba-Batak was based on a widespread concept of power in Indonesia. Among other things, the belief associated with it was that that power may be gained or accumulated respectively through the possession of certain objects or people „bursting“ with magic forces. According to an ancient tradition,

reinforced his political relations with those regions in a sacral manner by copulating with those spiritual daughters in the ring-rituals (Zoetmulder 1965b:331-333, 337; cf. Koentjaraningrat 1990:43).

²⁸ There is every indication that in those days Tantrism was very widespread in insular as well as in mainland Southeast Asia. Let me just give a small example: During the Sukhothai period Tantra as part of a syncretistic synthesis of Hinayana, Mahayana, and a belief in Hindu gods coincides with a very similar syncretistic Tantrism in Java (Prapandvidya 1996:61).

²⁹ The **milk-colored horse** corresponds to the Indian model according to which the milk-colored, the daring horse of the sun (*ashvaratna* = „horse treasure“) performs the same service to *cakravartin* as the divine **white elephant** (*hastiratna* = „elephant treasure“) does to *cakravartin* (cf. Zimmer 1973:127).

³⁰ *upacara* (Sanskrit): 1. insignia, sign of dignity (e. g. state-umbrella); 2. ritual, ceremonies (similar to service or prescribed by *adat*); 3. rite (Karow/Hilgers-Hesse 1962:474); (French) 1. Attributs du pouvoir, régalia; 2. Cérémonie officielle; 3. Hommage (Labrousse 1985:915)

³¹ *pusaka*: heir, heirloom, family possessions (Karow/Hilgers-Hesse 1962:310); (French) 1. héritage, patrimoine; 2. object (sacré) de famille, regalia (Labrousse 1985:648)

the rulers therefore strove for gathering objects and rallying people round containing or possessing an exceptional power. Consequently they did not only collect objects such as spears but also unusual and weird people, judging by their outward appearances (albinos, clowns, dwarfs, fortune-tellers etc.). In this way they believed to be capable of absorbing their strength and of increasing their power on the basis of being in possession of those objects and people. Conversely, the loss of those objects or people – no matter in what way it occurred – was interpreted as an actual decrease of the royal power and was many a time conceived as an unmistakable portent of an imminent collapse, that is, of an unexpected decline of the royal power (Anderson 1990:27-29).

Let me bring the by far not complete listing of Indian influences of the Batak to a close.

4. A PLEA OF AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF INDIANIZATION PROCESSES

An examination into Indian influences as well as modifications (which occurred within the framework of the adjustment to the tribal culture) would be fragmentary without taking into account the socio-cultural conditions of the „receiving/integrating” societies and cultures. Beyond the discovery of the mere process of the cultural transfer, it is imperative to study the selection, the elimination, the modification and the adjustment of the transfer in reliance on the active socio-cultural structures and on the conditions of the interethnic competition behind it. It follows that function and implications of features adopted prior and after its integration need to be carefully examined. Apart from the diffusion, it is required to show some interest in the „inner” work, the self-development of a society and culture as well as the interrelation of their elements. Only then it becomes clear that each indianization in Southeast Asia is to represent a special case of indigenization (due to the dependence on the culture and society concerned) at the same time.

Among the precolonial Toba-Batak it was impossible to discern a separate **political** sphere or exclusive political institutions. It was the kinship, and besides that, the religious relations that functioned as political relations. The authority system of the Toba-Batak was **polycentric**: Owing to the dominant role of kinship in precolonial Toba-Batak society there was no room for the development of a central authority or supra-regional system (**state organization**). Even the active adoption of the foreign concept of **god-kings**, widespread in the **indianized** states of Southeast Asia, in the form of the „god-king”-institution (*Singamangaraja*), which could be explained as an attempt to establish **authority with reference to a power source beyond the realm of kinship**, failed to lead to the setting up of a monocentric authority in Toba-Batak society. Inasmuch as kinship still continued to play a dominant role in Toba-Batak society, the political authority of the god-kings as well as of the priest-kings was limited by the lineage organization as well as by the alliance structure. Handicapped by the kinship organization the god-kings (and the priest-kings) consequently tried to found their authority mainly on a **divine (non-kin) sahala**, i. e. a spiritual legitimizing power, as manifested in their predominantly religious articulation of authority.

The fact that there used to be a co-existence of two entirely different concepts of power among the Batak – a (TB.) *tondi-sahala*³² based on the genealogical ties and a divine *tondi-sahala*³³ - could therefore be

³² By the term *tondi* the Batak understand an impersonal, substance-like imaginary vital force inherent in man, animals and objects; in relation to their environment and their discernible effectiveness this force in question is referred to as *sahala*, that could, accordingly be translated as „useful and beneficial influence“ or „power“ respectively. Power was by no means interpreted by the Batak as a definite relationship between individuals or groups of people but rather as a manifestation of a supernatural force existing independently and preceding their empirical subjects. According to the notion of the Toba, the power, *sahala*, can be traced back to the ancestors (up to the Eponym Siraja Batak) in the final analysis („**genealogical sahala**“). Every Batak, who is descended from the Eponym Siraja Batak and who belongs to a lineage (TB. *marga*) is, according to that, in possession of *tondi*. With the exception of priestly kings and of *Singamangaraja*, who equally referred to a „divine“ *sahala*, **the „normal” sahala therefore founded on kinship relations.**

³³ The *Singamangaraja* used to be worshipped as *tondi sahala* by the Batak in the precolonial era. Even the German missionary Warneck (1909:59) recognized the divine worship of the *Singamangaraja* „since his *tondi* (who with this in

interpreted as a clear evidence for the adoption of divine kingship from other indianized empires in Southeast Asia. At the same time this cultural adoption reveals the active indigenization and the adjustment of the Indian „model“ dictated by the social structure and ideology of the “receiving society”. Supposing this hypothesis is right then the effects of indianization on the Batak concept of power can be summed up as follows: With reference to the *tondi-sahala*-concept, the adopted and differently modified Indian model by other Southeast Asian societies only provided **an additional basis of justification due to which the indigenous theories of power were neither annulled nor modified**³⁴. Accordingly, the **co-existence of legitimizing traditions** is characteristic of the Batak society. While the local leaders continue to cling to their **autochthonous *sahala-tondi*-concept**, the *Singamangaraja* imposed **the concept of divine kingship** on the former **going beyond the basis of kinship**. In some respect the *sahala*-concept of the Batak bears some resemblance to other equally „Indian“ theories of power in Southeast Asian such as the particularly well-documented Javanese concept of power (Jav. *kasektèn*) (cf. Anderson 1990:17-77; Magnis-Suseno 1981:84-98)³⁵. Merely the kinship foundation of the concept of power turns out to be a special feature of the Batak.

The most significant impact of that adaptation of the Indian concept of power on the Batak culture is apparent from the fact that at no moment, not even in the times of serious menace by foreign enemies (e. g. the Islamic Padris from Minangkabau and the Dutch), the god-king did succeed in establishing political unity among the Toba-Batak. Contrary to scientists who interpret the god-king institution as a stateforming tendency, it rather represents an adoption of a foreign concept, which was in the process modified, without, however, transforming the polycentric authority system of the Toba-Batak as such.

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mind is called sahala as well) is exceedingly powerful and influential”. According to the Batak belief only a few chosen people are in possession of a *tondi* awarded to them by the deity Mulajadinabolon, that is, a **divine *sahala*** (Situmorang 1993a:79, 110).

³⁴ The real core of the Batak-religion, the *tondi*-cult, was virtually spared from the indianization (Parkin 1978:152, 186, 254).

³⁵ The Indian model going back to the *sakti*-concept frequently modified is widespread in most parts of Indonesia or Southeast Asia respectively: The Sanskrit- *sakti* (*shakti*) can be paraphrased as „creative force of the divine“, „energy“, „power“, „potency“, „virility“, „divine activities and contributions in nature“, „world force“ or „vital force“ (Dahm 1985; Zimmer 1973:81f, 507, 513, 515, 518, 523). In Javanese language, *sekti* is referred to as exceptional power/force inherent in individuals or objects especially, however, those of the king, which imply danger and bane, as is the case of the concentration of power, as soon as they get in contact with objects or individuals that are incapable of wearing or receiving them. This is what the Balinese understand by the „power of the ancestors“ (Gonda 1969:58; cf. Anderson 1990:17-77). The Batak *songti*-concept is a case in point of the indianization based on an adopted concept of "high cultures", only partially identical with the *sahala*-model of power found with the Batak. The Toba-term derived from Sanskrit (*sakti*) or from Malay (*sakti*) implies „dignity“, „majesty“, „proved to be right, confirmed by virtue of oracles and information of a datu [witch doctor, medicine man]“ (Warneck 1977:237). Likewise the Mandailing- and Angkola-Batak living in the South associate with this term a similar implication, that is, „evidence for the soundness of the claim of a *dukun* [Mal./I. seer, medicine man]“ (Dahm 1985). The radical *songti* is more frequently encountered in affixed forms such as (TB.) *hasongtion* („sacredness“) or in compounds such as (TB.) *raja hasongtion*, „a chosen individual, a ruler invested with divine power“.

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Abbreviations:

Sansk. = Sanskrit Mal. = Malay Jav. = Javanese
TB. = Toba-Batak I. = Indonesian Lat. = Latin

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