Unity in Diversity: Textile Expressions of the Human Condition in Times of Economic and Cultural Anxiety

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Unity in Diversity:
Textile Expressions of the Human Condition in Times of
Economic and Cultural Anxiety

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I: Acknowledgments

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II: Introduction

Questions about the roots of human nature have been plaguing human societies across the globe since the beginning of time. Whole societies are built around the perceived answers, and the art which these societies produce reflect upon it and even contribute to constructing ‘proper’ human behavior. One such artistic material that lays literally quite close to the human body is the textile. Textiles can possess the specific power to shape the way in which an individual human body is presented to others, as well as to position a collective of humans in relation to others. In other words, textiles can make both implicit statements about the state of an individual human being and about the group to which they belong. Considering that many also play significant parts in arranging human societies according to social statuses, textiles are capable of merging conceptions about human nature into the structure of human society.

In Indonesia, a country of many diverse cultures possessing their own unique traditional textiles, the same concepts apply. However, increased globalization had put pressures upon certain Indonesian groups to find ways to adapt their textile craft in order to survive the changing environmental, economic, political, and cultural climates. The implications of such textiles changing in form or usage lead to similarly dramatic shifts in the cloth’s implied statements about the nature of humanity. However, there is one Indonesian textile in particular that is endowed with a dynamic traditional understanding of human nature that makes it flexible in a way that it can participate in these national and global shifts without losing its original meaning or its purposes: Toba Batak ulos.
1. *Ulos and the Human Condition: Unity in Diversity*

The Toba Batak is one of six sub-ethnic groups that make up the greater Batak ethnicity. Largely located in Sumatra, the other sub-ethnicities include the Toba, Karo, Pakpak, Simalungun, Angkola and Mandailing Batak. Between them, each has their own distinct culture, drastically different language and ritual practices, and so on and so forth. Many of the sub-ethnicities actually know very little about the others’ cultures, but one thing they do share in, however, is their use of textiles. Although they have different words for each—*ulos* for the Toba, *uwis* for the Karo, *hiou* for the Simalungun, and so on—they do use *ulos* in strikingly similar ways. The Toba Batak in particular are noted by scholars as having retained their traditional knowledge and rituals while simultaneously being located at the nexus of a growing textile industry.

By focusing specifically upon the Toba Batak *ulos*’ creation process and ritual functions, I intend to define what qualities about the culture surrounding *ulos* reflect upon human nature. Then, I will examine how those qualities interact with global pressures. Methods include secondary research into the significance of *ulos* design and motif—largely drawing upon Sandra Niessen’s work and that of other scholars. In addition, I have interviewed a number of *ulos* weavers—both employing traditional and modern methods—in order to consider their perspectives about the *ulos* creation process in conjunction with Niessen’s conclusions about *ulos* design. I have also held long discussions with a variety of non-weavers in order to try to glean the significance of *ulos* to the non-weaving Batak population, as well as conversations with

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an expert in the field of Batak cultural history, and the Chairman of the Heritage Conservation Department in the Batak Center who provided a deeper look into an Indonesian national stance on *ulos* and shifting international standards.

According to Sandra Niessen, *ulos* textile designs hint at a philosophy that all various parts of a collective originate from some common core. In conjunction with my examination of the Toba Batak marriage ritual (*manglosi*), it has become apparent that the ritual’s utilization of *ulos* and connection to a prominent Toba Batak social system both represents and enables its significance in uniting the divided, distinct parts of the Toba Batak people. Most fascinatingly, the discourses about *ulos* at which I have looked and decided to represent in this paper also reflect that very same ambition: unification despite great divides.

Other forces seek something similar, but they approach *ulos* in different ways. The influence of global fashion and related discourses about how to implement *ulos* into that industry seem to conclude that *ulos*’ form as a textile cloth needs to adapt to shifting fashions. The concern is that if the *ulos* production industry does not adapt, it may fade from usage. Yet, the further *ulos* is adapted from its original state, the more likely it is to lose its original significance and special capabilities to arrange society for the sake of promoting harmonious unity.

However, the Heritage Conservation Department has alternative solutions in mind to tackle the fading demand for *ulos*, of which the solutions both promotes the *ulos* industry and attempts to retain *ulos*’ traditional significance. It is quite simple: to foster an understanding in the greater Indonesian populace of what *ulos* means to the Batak people and how it is traditionally used. At the same time that the department seeks to foster learning, it treats the populace as consumers and encourages them to support Batak culture and *ulos* artisans by purchasing their products. In the context of the two extreme perspectives on how to treat traditional crafts and practices in a
modern society—of which one can either preserve the tradition as closely to how it performed historically, or one can drastically adapt it to said modern society—the Heritage Conservation Department takes a hybrid approach that arguably may be more effective than the other approaches described.
III. Conflicts and Divides: Forging Harmonious Human Society

In order to understand ulos significance as a uniting force, one must first consider that the Batak subethnicities possess a tumultuous history. Wars, famines, and conflicts occurred frequently between clans and even between families. These were times of great division amongst the Batak people, and the culture that emerged from the states of constant tension retains even today that primary goal to repair divisions between the Batak peoples and foster harmonious living. Ulos, especially during marriage ceremonies, greatly contributed to mending those breaks between the Batak. Even nowadays, ulos accomplishes this by calling upon certain commonly held characteristics of human existence in order to appeal to common humanity, and in the process, re-forges the bonds between humans.

a. The Dalihan Na Tolu Explained: Hula-Hula, Boru, and Dongan Tub

Deeply connected to ulos' role as a mender of broken human bonds is the complex philosophy that reflects ulos’ aesthetics and ritual function: the Dalihan Na Tolu. The Dalihan Na Tolu is a conditional system that grants an individual three simultaneously held familial statuses. While factoring in multiple familial contexts, the Dalihan Na Tolu system takes great pains to balance out gender dynamics between individuals and between their families in attempts

4 Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
to foster respect and harmonious living. As a result, it is indirectly concerned with assuaging any pre-existing tensions between future family and preventing future splits between them.

The three statuses in mind are the hula-hula, the boru, and the dongan tubu. Briefly, upon a couple’s marriage, the wife’s immediate family becomes hula-hula to the married couple, who are now boru. The dongan tubu simply refers to the larger family clan. The behaviors are first informed by a couple of principles about how an individual should consider each status:

The Toba Batak people formulate the norm as follows: Arrogantly hula (respect for the hula-hula), manat mardongan-tubu (watch out for the dongan-tubu), elek marboru (be full of love for the boru). The point is to remind not to take action or speak words that can cause offense, anger, hurt, or sorrow to the hula, dongan tubu, and boru. If that happens, and is not followed by an attempt to apologize, then there is confidence that the person will not survive in his life.

It is clear that the three statuses play significant roles in preventing conflict, conflict which is caused by “offence, anger, hurt, or sorrow.” The three characteristics key to prevention are respect, awareness, and love. They must all follow certain social etiquettes towards each other in order to prevent conflicts between the new family.

b. The Dalihan Na Tolu and Social Interrelation

With these three feelings firmly held, the social rules that derive from them are key to further facilitating these attitudes, and they more concretely serve to prevent conflict.

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5 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).

Baez 8
After marriage, the wife’s brother (titled *tulang*) must from now on “be worshipped by his sister’s husband.” Drawing upon the assumption that the chances of conflict developing between two similarly-aged, not blood-related men are quite high in comparison to other relationships, then this mode of interpersonal behavior affords the *tulang* a right to respect from the unfamiliar *boru*. The new husband cannot assume a stereotypically authoritative position—and cannot potentially butt heads with the other male members—because of his newfound *boru* status.

Another notable aspect of the *boru*’s relationship with the *tulang* is how he is allowed to interact with the *tulang*’s wife. If he desires to speak with her, he “cannot directly speak to the *hula-hula*’s [tulang’s] wife . . . There must be a mediator between them . . . to prevent affairs.” That particular goal to “prevent affairs” most clearly underlines the way in which this limited interaction prevents conflicts. It can be readily presumed that affairs create tensions between families, and if their deception is revealed, can at best lead to splits between the family and at worst lead to violence. By respecting the *tulang* (or *hula-hula*; they are one in the same in this case) and his wife, the *boru*’s acquiesce to this social etiquette helps to ensure that his integration into his wife’s family goes smoothly and that while in the family he does not ‘rock the boat’ so to speak.

Moving from an example between individuals, let me discuss the interrelations between the two families after their children get married through a broader examination of the Toba Batak’s lineage system. Most notably lineages seemed to be balanced out, and neither the male nor the female’s ancestors are prioritized over the other. According to Sandra Niessen’s chapter “Toba Batak Matriliny: A Deception?”, “Toba descent

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7 Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
8 Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
groups never relinquish members (except under very extraordinary circumstances), be they male or female.” In other words, when a woman marries a man, she is not gifted to the man’s family nor forced to cut ties with her birth family. In fact, neither does the man. The fact that both can keep their ties to their relatives levels these households’ power over their children and future descendants. Taking a broader perspective upon this claim, the fact that children remain inside both families indirectly forges a stronger bond between said lineages because it socially connects two biologically unrelated groups to each other. In terms of assuaging conflict, this bond presumably was quite effective. If war often occurred between clans and families, then the tie of marriage supported by the subsequent Dalihan Na Tolu social behaviors pressured the families (and the couple) to not only respect, love, and be aware of each other; but also to interact with each other in a way that levels the playing fields between them.

c. On Gender in Dalihan Na Tolu

A subject that this section has been circling, one that deeply contributes to leveling the playing field between families, is the Dalihan Na Tolu’s consideration of gender. It is a particularly striking point that begs separate examination because of the gendered qualities associated with the titles hula-hula and boru. Literally, boru means ‘woman’ in Bataknese; and as previously suggested through the interactions between the hula-hula and the boru, the hula-hula is imbued with a power and an authority opposite to the boru, who is deferential and relatively submissive. As such, if the boru’s

10 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
submissive qualities are also tied to the subject of ‘woman,’ then it is reasonable to interpret the conversely dominant qualities of the hula-hula as representative of the alternative masculine gender. What is particularly striking is to whom these titles are bestowed. Post-marriage, the man and his wife adopt the feminine title, and the woman’s family adopts the masculine title. In the context of gendered power imbalances, this system prevents the man and patrilineage from overshadowing the woman’s family and her lineage. In other words, the woman’s family is better enabled to navigate gender inequalities within the society and to be treated respectfully. Respect is key to living in harmony and preventing conflict.

In light of its gendered dynamics, let me turn to a broader interpretation about gender in Dalihan Na Tolu. Namely, the whole system is conditional, and as such, it paints a rather fluid picture of gender contained within one individual. After a marriage, although the wife’s father has become hula-hula to his daughter and new son-in-law, he is also boru to his own wife’s family. His familial status is neither absolute nor singular. The multiplicity of his relationships with his family reflects the Dalihan Na Tolu system’s capability to adapt to various potential points of familial conflict, and to keep the husband’s masculine power in check.

In addition, his balancing act between statuses suggests that this hypothetical father is capable of performing both feminine (submissive) and masculine (dominant) roles. It is not socially debasing for him to behave in the feminine manner--considering that one of the key norms of Toba Batak society is to be “full of love for the boru.” Neither is he expected to behave with complete masculinity at all times. What the Dalihan Na Tolu suggests about gender within the male figure is that certain situations require vastly different behavioral traits in order to keep
the social peace; and both masculine and feminine characteristics are crucial to maintaining the balance between clans. Lean too far in one direction, and you are in for conflict.

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The mixture of masculine and feminine is no more obviously represented than in the Toba Batak marriage ritual. It is also no insignificant fact that the *Dalihan Na Tolu* statuses are granted after a couple’s marriage. This paper has already discussed what occurs *after* marriage, but not the ritual itself nor the *ulos* concerned with it. A close examination of the typical Toba Batak marriage ceremony and its relevant *ulos* should further explicate upon the mixture of male and female and perhaps more on the significance of these characteristics contained within one individual.
IV. Manglosi and *Ulos Ragi Hotang*: Repairing the Broken Human Condition

The *ulos* used during the marriage ritual is the *Ulos Ragi Hotang*. According to an informational plaque next to one such *ulos* on display in a local Toba Batak museum, it reads, "Literally ‘ragi hotang’ means root of rattan. This kind of *Ulos* is given to a bride and groom by the bride’s parents while saying a prayer that their marriage would be as strong as the roots of rattan.”\\(^{11}\) In general, the wishes behind the gift of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* resonate strongly with the principles behind the *Dalihan Na Tolu*, perhaps even influencing and being influenced by each other. This paper has already established that the *Dalihan Na Tolu* seeks to merge female with male, both within a single individual and between lineages. *Ulos Ragi Hotang* suggests a very similar function, but the nature of its creation process suggest that male and female were originally never separate in the first place. In turn, that indicates that the current state of humanity is in divide and marriage seeks to repair those broken bonds on a variety of levels: between two people, between two clans, and between separate biologies.

**a. Manglosi: The Marriage Ritual Explained**

The marriage ritual itself is deeply concerned with symbolically tying the new couple together and drawing the new husband into the wife’s family as their son-in-law. Before the marriage is conducted, the future *hula-hula* (the parents of the future wife) prepare an *Ulos Ragi*

Hotang to gift the man.\textsuperscript{12} A long textile that intermingles deep red, black and white (sometimes yellow, as well), their gift demonstrates that the family has accepted the man into their clan.

During the climax of the ceremony, a ritual called manglosi is performed, in which the long ulos is wrapped around the couple’s shoulders and the frayed ends knotted together. In the words of Ibu Emmy, one of my informants whose family has been using Ulos Ragi Hotang at their weddings for generations, the act symbolically unifies husband and wife under the Batak tradition by marrying them “as one.”\textsuperscript{13} It also indicates that the two familial clans are now at the same social level, in order to promote respect between them.\textsuperscript{14}

Despite one’s marriage presumably occurring only once, the Ulos Ragi Hotang can still be worn during other marriage ceremonies. However, only men are allowed to adorn the cloth and only at other marriage rituals featuring their own family.\textsuperscript{15} By wearing their Ulos Ragi Hotang at another’s marriage, they visibly mark themselves as related to the couple. In other words, they visibly showcase their familial bonds, and thus, their investment in the consequent Dalihan Na Tolu social titles they have already received.

It goes without saying that relationships are forged at the marriage ceremony, but not all are solely the one between husband and wife. On the subject of familial relationship, Ibu Emmy claims that to get “married without Ragi Hotang is a signal that you have left Batak tradition.”\textsuperscript{16} On the surface level, this seems quite obvious. If one does not enact certain traditional rituals, then it is a signal that one no longer participates in the tradition itself. However, considering the

\textsuperscript{13} Emmy Pardede (Personal Communication, 10 November 2019).
\textsuperscript{14} Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
\textsuperscript{15} Emmy Pardede (Personal Communication, 10 November 2019).
\textsuperscript{16} Emmy boru Pardede (Personal Communication, 10 November 2019).
stakes of the marriage ceremony in Toba Batak tradition, after which whole families are interconnected, to exclude *Ulos Ragi Hotang*—and consequently, to forsake Toba Batak tradition—indicates that one is not interested in forming crucial familial ties with other Toba Batak and promoting the mutual respect that is encouraged by the *Dalihan Na Tolu* system.

Now, leaving Batak tradition may not seem so detrimental, but the creation process of *ulos*—and of *Ulos Ragi Hotang*—provides striking clues into Toba Batak philosophies. These concepts ruminate upon the human condition, the forces of society which mar it, and how the marriage ritual (and the following *Dalihan Na Tolu* system) seek to repair humanity’s broken state. Therefore, by retaining the *manglosi* in marriage ceremonies and the *Dalihan Na Tolu* in the social system, the Toba Batak are not only preserving an ancestral tradition, but they are also continuing to perform the work of their ancestors to mend divides in the individual human and between human social groups.

**b. Male and Female: Merging the Two Through Marriage**

There are two different designs of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* that I would like to consider. The first regards the relationship between genders. According to Sandra Niessen, who conducted an extensive study into the design and aesthetics of *ulos* across the Batak sub-ethnicities, most *ulos* contain one ‘female’ pattern and one ‘male’ pattern, each occupying one side of the *ulos* cloth,17 which are spatially distanced from each other on the *ulos* piece. The textiles itself is not continuous, and therefore, the natures of male and female, despite occupying the same space, are not directly connected to each other.

This is not the case during ulos’ creation. While on the weaving loom, the ulos textile is “removed from the loom without the warp first being cut.” In other words, during its creation, the male and female sides on the ulos are woven together. They are connected and undivided. It is when the textile is removed from the loom to be prepared for human usage that it is cut specifically along the border between the male and female design. This process can be put into an essentialist perspective when considering the popular interpretation that the various different designs of ulos’ all symbolically represent an ideal humanoid body. In alignment with this anthropomorphic interpretation, the continuous loop of cloth upon the loom could represent the original state of the human at its birth. Thus, the splitting of the textile suggests two things. The first is that it is essential to the original human condition to possess both masculine and feminine characteristics simultaneously. The second is that by participating in society, that essential human quality is torn, almost irreparably. In the case of Ragi Hotang, the marriage ritual takes on an essential importance for its attempts to repair a broken human nature by connecting female to male “as one.”

The second design I would like to consider makes similar statements about how social interactions should mimic the essential relationship between male and female. Ulos Ragi Hotang shares a common color scheme with other ulos types: red, white/yellow, and black/blue. On this scheme, Niessen states, “Colour is a foremost means of expressing totality. In the Batak area, the individual strands of red, white and blue-black represent members of the kinship triad, and twisted together the strands represent the system as a whole. Totality is expressed as a composite.” Her interpretation not only directly implicates the “kinship triad,” which is the

Dalihan Na Tolu, but by virtue of its design sharing the same space as the male and female designs, it connects the nature of that social system with the nature of the individual human and its struggles to repair divisions. Considering the philosophy of its aesthetics, the functions of Ulos Ragi Hotang in manglosi implies that both individuals and human societies should be seeking to rectify the differences between them and to come together as a united whole, as “composites” of different people and lineages. Yet, just as the word “composite” seems to suggest, whole does not equal homogeneous. Ragi Hotang and marriage indicate that there is also a truth about variation as part of the human condition, as well as unity.

### c. Merging Male and Female: Hybridity as the Key to Unity

While manglosi does symbolically tie male to female, it must be acknowledged that marriage does not literally rejoin them. However, the two can intermingle in another way: genetically. There is one aesthetic feature of some ulos that implicates the importance of how the genetic intermingling that results in children can symbolically rejoin male with female. Tacked onto the Ulos Ragi Hotang displayed in the local museum, there is what is called a sirat—a broad strip of red, white, and black yarn intertwined to create a border at the bottom of the ulos; and they often sport a phrase or name of the original ulos’ wearer. Although sirat is a relatively new aesthetic for ulos and was not historically implemented into the textile, the common phrases that are found stitched onto them—which are quite old and traditional—are particularly telling. For example, Ibu Emmy showed me her and her husband’s own Ragi Hotang. At the border is one of these sirat, detailing her and her husband’s names. In this way, the use of sirat

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20 Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
21 See Figure 1, Appendix.
further marks the cloth as part of the union between one male and one female, but the *Ulos Ragi Hotang* hanging in the local museum sported a common phrase instead of name: *Horas Jalagabe.* According to the museum guide Bapak Ondi, this is a common Batak phrase meant to bestow two blessings at once. The first, *horas,* means “you be strong” in Bataknese, which refers to the Toba Batak’s warrior culture in their historical moments of great conflict. In the same breath that one wishes upon another warrior strength, they say *jalagabe. Gabe* translates to “fulfill in your life.” According to Bapak Ondi, this means that in order to “complete your life,” you should have children--preferably sons. The fact that this particular phrase is stitched onto an *Ulos Ragi Hotang* contains deep implications that Toba Batak marriage’s deeper philosophies relate strongly to having children.

It is common that after marriage, the newly bonded couple has children. On a biological scale, their children are a genetic combination of the two parents. Through the union between male and female, they have produced something between them that tangibly represents their unity and the intermingling of their lineages. Furthermore, the children, the couple themselves, and their ancestors all share in the fact that they are the product of male and female intermingling. Therefore, when male and female come together and have a child, their bond that begins with marriage is further developed and fulfilled in said child; and are a result, they are, in effect, tackling the problem of an unnatural split between male and female. The solution to overcoming this divide is to create a hybrid (the child) between themselves and their family lineages--of which are comprised of other ancestral hybrids.

The word hybrid is key, because there are other Toba Batak philosophies that indicate that while the goal is to unify humanity, individuality still remains. In Niessen’s work, she

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22 See Figure 2, Appendix.
discusses this core ideal and one way in which historical Toba Batak society reflected it through their treatment of ulos. The philosophy, in her words, is one that “emphasizes the generation of all phenomena from an essence or core, and the participation of the ‘part’ in the ‘whole.’” It is important to note that joining this “whole” does not erase one’s distinct qualities that make him or her a “part.” In the context of Ulos Ragi Hotang and other similarly designed ulos textiles, Niessen also records that many ulos textiles are “usually acquired on the advice of a local healer. It is believed that at least one of the range of patterns displayed in the cloth will appeal to the soul of its owner . . . This belief suggests that the range of patterning in Toba textiles is perceived as corresponding to the variety of tastes and needs of the human soul.” Her words indicate two points. One is the fact that despite the commonalities shared by various ulos types, there is a “range of patterns.” Even among Ragi Hotang I have noticed that the designs vary slightly between the cloths. While they are all recognizably Ragi Hotang due to their consistent design elements that are distinctly Ragi Hotang-esque, there are subtle variations in color shade, overall size of the cloths, distribution of the patterns, and so on and so forth. The second is the association of this variation with the “human soul.” In light of Niessen’s study, diversity is just as essential as unity to the human condition. Unity and diversity portray another duality represented in Toba Batak ulos textiles.

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In summary, Ulos Ragi Hotang and the manglosi ritual in marriage ceremonies are monumental to supporting the goals of the Dalihan Na Tolu social system. By seeking to restore the ties between individuals, their families, and ancestral lineages, manglosi participates in

25 See Figure 5, Appendix.
promoting a lasting harmony that assuages the conflicts that come with social divide. Marriage is unique among the life cycle rituals in its ability to unite these separated people. It is also a ritual that has been able to adapt to major shifts in local and national histories, by nature of marriage being a very common ritual performed across various cultures. It seems appropriate that Toba Batak marriage, too, is one variation on a whole globe’s worth of marriage practices.
V. Growing Global Pressures: The Economy and

Ulos Industry

Due to its continued relevance within the modern era and to the unfortunate fact that humanity is still split, in the words of one such weaver of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* named Ibu Hertati, it is no wonder that among the Toba Batak people, “*Ragi Hotang* is always in demand.”26 Yet, the social and political landscape of Indonesia has changed as history moves on, and with the growing influence of globalization, Toba Batak culture is no less subject to those changes. The aim of this section is to explore the shifts in Toba Batak *ulos*-culture and industry and to explore how the consideration and usage of *ulos* has changed with them, the effects of *ulos*-culture gaining itself a global audience, and how the Indonesian government plans to steer *ulos*-culture towards the future.

**a. Shifts in the Economy: Ulos Industry and the Youth**

The younger generations are always associated with change. They stand on the cusp of their parents’ traditions and the potential to change both themselves and the world. One of the shifts in Indonesia is in its economy, which has undeniably influenced the ways in which the youth interact with the world and with their ethnic traditions. *Ulos* occupies a precarious position in regard to the economy because *ulos*-production has become an industry that has adapted to modern economic practices, but it is also a specialized industry--one that is not very visible to the Indonesian public.

26 Hertati Siamaan (Personal Communication, 6 November 2019).
As a result, the economy of Indonesia has participated in diminishing the usage of *ulos* in rituals, even in the marriage ceremony. Bapak Johannes Marbun, Chairman of the Heritage Conservation Department, has noticed that many young people believe that weaving *ulos* yields “no economic benefit,” because it’s an “ancient” practice that fails to adapt to the demands of a modernized economy.27 Their mindset quite clearly reflects the generations’ driving motivation: financial stability. One such young person named Corie comments that young people are throwing off traditional Batak culture because, “West culture comes to us [and] technology. Maybe people tend to go to cities like Jakarta [and] Yogyakarta, so we don’t really [have an] interest anymore. It’s different with older people here [in Balige, Sumatra]. Because they live here from young to old; they know the history.”28 With the promise of better job opportunities in bigger cities,29 young people are leaving their smaller towns and villages for the sprawling urban conglomerates. Removed from their communities that are thick with Batak traditions, it’s not surprising that these young people might lose interest in them. Because the larger cities in Indonesia do not feature common displays of Batak culture, the social pressures for young Batak people to commit to them may be relieved.

**b. Ulos Industry: Change the Tools, Change the Scope of Creativity**

Nevertheless, there is an *ulos*-industry; but that, too, is subject to certain economic shifts. Namely, new technologies for weaving have changed the scope of creativity in *ulos* design, as

27 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
28 Corie Pardosi (Personal Communication, 10 November 2019).
well as endowed a greater span of *ulos* distribution across the country. In comparison to traditional weaving processes, for two weeks I lived in a small Batak village named Desa Meat on Lake Toba, and the weavers there employed traditional weaving practices. I had the opportunity to observe them, as well as weave part of an *Ulos Ragi Hotang* myself. After those two weeks of observation, in hindsight I was struck by how different traditional weaving is from the modernized production processes.

I often sat in discussion with the Desa Meat weavers and questioned them about their tools. The weaving apparatus itself, as well as their tools, were brilliantly simple. Entirely wooden, with a seat roped to the loom so that the weaver could pull the cloth taut against the body. The other tools include smoothed wooden sticks and other similarly shaped materials that separated weft-yarn from warp-yarn and managed the multiple colored yarns so as to create coherent patterns. Two of the bystanders were kind enough to draw me a diagram of the apparatus and its tools, and one woman allowed me to take a photo of her at work on the loom. The loom is quite similar to other looms across the Batak sub-ethnicities, and Niessen herself observed how a weaver—one of the participants in her study—utilized the loom’s design to mix patterns and creative unique variations of one type of *ulos*. One of the TB Silalahi museum’s guides Bapak Ondi confirms Niessen’s observation, saying that mixing motifs is quite normal among Batak weavers. Considering the anthropomorphic interpretation of *ulos* textiles, the unique designs both represent the essential diversity within the human, while still maintaining common the motifs and color schemes to identify it as one type of *ulos*.

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30 See Figure 3, Appendix.
31 See Figure 4, Appendix.
33 Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
In contrast, modern weaving machines in some ways enable more creativity than the traditional Batak loom. While these machines are unlikely to be found in smaller, more traditional villages like Desa Meat, the more urban areas like Balige city—just a 20-minute drive from Desa Meat—have adopted machine looms to populate their organized textile mills. It has been a slow development from using traditional tools to modern machines. In the 1930’s, “the textile industry had emerged in Balige, which produced ulos by mechanization—from traditional looms to ATBM—and yielded other products such as sarong, clothes, blankets, mosquito nets.”

In other words, the parameters of the modern loom enable its weavers to craft not only ulos textiles but other materials, as well. In that sense, one might interpret these machines as having a greater versatility in production and in turn, better opportunities to ‘get creative.’

One interesting factoid is that ATBM stands for *alat tenun bukan mesin*, which translates to, “looms are not machines.” This weaving apparatus mirrors the shape of the more preferred ATM loom, which is a standard Western, metal weaving machine that I often saw in the textile mills I visited in Balige; but the ATBM does not share in its metal material. Forged out of wood, the ATBM represents a compromise between traditional weaving and modern industry. Those who use the ATBM capitalize on the speed of the apparatus—where one handwoven cloth can take weeks up to a month, the ATBM and ATM looms might take two hours to produce a

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36 See Figure 6, Appendix.
37 See Figure 7, Appendix.
single *ulos*—while taking comfort in their perception of the ATBM is not a machine, likely due to its wooden qualities.

c. *Modern versus Traditional Machine: For the Sake of Diversity*

Yet, despite the distinction from ATM machines that the ATBM’s name seems to suggest, it shares the same qualities. They both can produce non-textile items, and they both possess the same limitation that the traditional loom does not have: pattern mixing. When I visited the textile mills in Balige, there were numerous machines, yes, but there were also other tools of which I unfortunately never got the names. One type of tool was a collection of large stiff sheets with holes punctured in them. No one sheet quite matched the other. One of the nearby workers mentioned, translated to me by Ibu Emmy, that those sheets were fed into a loom and dictated the pattern it would produce in the cloth. To me, this loosely indicates that perhaps the machines were not being used in a versatile manner, because each pattern was standardized and produced uniform rolls of *ulos*. It wasn’t until I interviewed another weaver named Ibu Merlina, who used a mechanized loom for her solo business, that it was confirmed for me that the machines did not support motif mixing and matching. I asked how many types of *ulos* she is able to weave, and she replied, “I weave one type of *ulos* . . . Because I only have one tool for one type of *ulos*.”\(^39\) If the loom she uses is so limited that she cannot even create more than one kind of *ulos*—which handweavers can do quite easily with the same set of tools—then it stands to reason that the machine by association cannot support the numerous amount of patterns that


\(^39\) Merlina Huajulu (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
can be uniquely arranged upon one cloth by one who weaves by hand. Furthermore, many old
patterns are fading from popularity because machines cannot replicate them. According to Pak
Ondi, the machines can do some of the old patterns but not all. Even if they can create these
patterns, it takes a lot of time and expense that can be better spent on less ancient, simpler
patterns.\textsuperscript{40}

Despite attempts to keep tradition in mind when adapting to the shifting production
standards and the economic demands of the modernized textile industry, the ulos production
industry is unfortunately falling in line with a common stereotype associated with Western
industry: mass production. Because the mechanized loom produces uniform products, they are
promoting a homogeneity which opposes the ulos philosophies about human nature and the
corresponding functions of ulos. Whereas a diverse set of handwoven ulos mark each individual
as a unique member of a social whole, the homogenized ulos from modern machines remove that
diverse characteristic and mar the message sent by ulos during certain rituals, including the Toba
Batak marriage ceremony.

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It is a tricky trade-off. Does one accept a sacrifice of ulos’ traditional meanings for ease
of ulos supply? On the positive side, machines lower the price of ulos greatly,\textsuperscript{41} and they open
doors to take advantage of other avenues in the industry—such as the ability to increase
distribution across greater swaths of land.\textsuperscript{42} A bigger, cheaper supply of ulos may promote its

\textsuperscript{40} Ondi Siregar (Personal Communication, 13 November 2019).
\textsuperscript{41} According to Ibu Emmy, in the Balige area, one handwoven ulos is approximately over 550,000 rupiah, and the
same type from a machine is 80,000-100,000 rupiah.
\textsuperscript{42} Tanudjaja, Shinta. (2017) “History of Woven Industry in Balige” (pp. 22). Retrieved from
https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=id&u=http://docplayer.info/37096320-Bab-ii-sejarah-industri-
usage among the young generations, who are key to continuing the tradition. Yet, in favor of the handweaving process, it may be difficult to justify homogenizing *ulos* for the sake of the economy if the *ulos* cannot convey its core meaning, the very *reason* for why it exists and persists: to mend divides between humans and promote harmony between naturally diverse individuals under the ideal way of living. There is no easy answer when it comes to the question of how a society should respond to shifts in major systems such as industry and economy, just as there is no easy way to conclude how Indonesians should consider how to handle one of the byproducts of mechanized *ulos*: non-traditional items that sport *ulos* motifs.
VI. The International Approach: *Ulos’ Role in a Changing Industry*

One of the few subjects on which all my informants could share their input was the topic of how *ulos* cloth and motif have been used to create non-traditional Batak items, such as handbags, wallets, fashionable clothing, etcetera. As a result, there is much general discourse about whether or not these items qualify as *ulos*. In addition to the divide over how to consider these items, it is worth considering how these items are being marketed to help support the Batak industry—regardless of whether or not they can actually be labeled *ulos*. Namely, they are being marketed as universally fashionable and as souvenir-esque gifts. By examining *Ulos Ragi Hotang* as a gift from the *hula-hula* to a future *boru* son in law, one can see some parallels between *ulos* and gifts in general, which brings up questions about what sets Batak *ulos* apart from gifts and from fashion.

All in all, my informants seemed split on whether or not to label items such as cloth handbags, fashionable dresses, and so on as *ulos*. Pak Ondi and Pak Johannes both state that these items can no longer be considered *ulos*, and their conclusions may be informed by a definition of *ulos* by its ritual function. Because the non-traditional items have neither their own ritual functions nor can they substitute the original *ulos* cloth during ritual, they may not qualify as *ulos*. On the other hand, weavers Ibu Hertati and Ibu Erika—both weavers in Desa Meat—indicate that these non-traditional items can be called *ulos*, too. Their perceptions may be

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informed by the alternative definition of ulos, defined by its design and motifs—which are certainly closely mirrored in the non-traditional cloth items, if not outright copied at times. Because my informants varied so greatly in their answers and because I found no evidence contesting either perceptions, I was determined to do more research into the ways in which these items are used to see if I could glean any more clues into the nature of ulos as it has been used to inspire new forms.

a. Global Audiences and the Fashion Industry: Adapting to International Standards

In response to growing global influences, ulos patterns have been implemented into items that are more easily marketed to consumers from various walks of life. Clothes are worn all over the world, and other items like handbags are also commonly employed across cultures and geography. Some have sought to take advantage of these globally recognized items in order to promote ulos and its industry. Designer Edward Hutabarat, known as Edo, has showcased a number of fashion exhibitions featuring ulos designs implemented into international clothing. During one of his shows that occurred close to National Ulos Day, Hutabarat claimed that, “Through tonight’s presentation, I want to prove that ulos is ready to adapt in order to suit all Indonesians and the international crowd alike.”45 First, Hutabarat’s words suggest that he believes ulos to be a textile unsuitable for usage on a national and international scale, and that it should be. He strongly suggests that ulos is not solely for the usage of the Batak peoples, but in

fact should belong to the whole of Indonesia and to interested international parties. Second, he identifies a key element to the controversy surrounding non-traditional items inspired by ulos: adaptation. As ulos is being transformed in this way, it is better able to be transmitted across cultures.

During one of Hutabarat’s shows, Tarutung Regent Nikson Nabanan weighed in one of Hutabarat’s projects. He supported Hutabarat’s efforts to “promote ulos . . . to the global market,” and added that he was “committed to helping artisans develop their tenun [weaving] business in North Tapanuli by providing more modern facilities, as well as promote and market their works through the Regional Handicraft Council (Dekranasda).”46 Regent Nabanan’s mere presence at Hutabarat’s presentation is enough to represent the local government’s support of his endeavor to ‘adapt’ ulos for global consumption, but his additional statements make clear his loyalties. He is concerned with helping the “artisans,” the weavers; and it is evident that he believes the most tangible way for the government to help is by modernizing the creation process with more “modern facilities” and to garner public attention.

b. Ulos Culture and Gift Giving: New Form, Same Idea

Further on the subject of transmitting ulos across cultures, there is another market for which ulos motifs been have implemented into nontraditional forms, the tourism industry, specifically by mixing ulos with its gift-giving culture. According to Bapak Ondi, “If a tourist receives ulos, it is as a gift. Batak peoples can also gift ulos to non-Batak people.”47 In other words a tourist is


unlikely to buy *ulos* to wear at a Batak ceremony but as a gift or souvenir instead. Batak peoples, too, can give *ulos* without ceremony; directly indicating that, yes, non-Batak people can both receive and wear *ulos*.

The concept of *ulos* as a cross-cultural gift shines new light upon *ulos*’ ability to forge bonds and mend divides. Take *Ulos Ragi Hotang* for example. It is gifted to the new couple by the bride’s parents. Other traditional textiles can be given as gifts, such as *Sadum*, which signify appreciation and well-wishes for the receiver. In the context of the *Dalihan Na Tolu*, the gift of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* binds male and female, family and family together. As a gift, the *ulos* may perform another, subtler function in addition to binding. It also signals the respectful and loving relationship that the *hula-hula* and *boru* are supposed to fulfill.

The non-traditional items that are sold as souvenirs are most likely to become gifts, too, from visitors to friends and family back home. Presuming that these hypothetical gift-buyers are giving the non-traditional items as a sign that they care enough about the other person to remember them and buy a gift, then these souvenirs can similarly help to establish good relationships and harmonious living just as *ulos* can. The gift—however non-traditional it may be—reminds the gift-giver and gift-receiver of their bond, tangibly represents that bond, and ultimately brings them closer to each other. When paired with specific Batak motifs, does that make the items any less *ulos*?

Both Hutabarat’s take on *ulos*’ shifting forms and the concept of *ulos* as a cross-cultural gift fail to acknowledge the very prevalent, following issue of cultural appropriation. According to the English Oxford Dictionary, cultural appropriation can be defined as such: “the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the practices, customs, or aesthetics of one social

48 Emmy Pardede (Personal Communication, 10 November 2019).
or ethnic group by members of another (typically dominant) community or society.” Despite the vague quality of this definition, it does pinpoint one aspect about what defines a culturally appropriated item: dominance. When a dominant society assimilates traits of another society, then that can be considered cultural appropriation.

Transiting to the context of Batak ulos, it is somewhat unfortunate that, in general, traditional ulos textiles are not considered desirable as a gift to a non-Batak person, that their form needs to be more pleasing and culturally relevant to foreign consumers. In the context of such a view, it seems reasonable that ulos’ form must change; but the view prioritizes the perspectives of an international audience rather than factoring in both international desires with local Batak needs.

The pressures of globalization and fierce economy are always threatening the ulos industry to adapt to its standards, and they may one day superimpose ulos tradition with modern convenience and comfort. This was and still is evident as traditional weaving techniques are being put to the side in favor of employing modern machines. In the context of fashionable clothing, Hutabarat states that “Ulos must become part of our nation’s wealth.”49 It must not only become a profitable industry, but profitable for the nation; and Hutabarat and others in the ulos-industry have attempted to make ulos fit for that goal by altering its form so that the textiles may participate in the national and global economies. In fact, that begs the question: If ulos can be gifted to anyone inside and outside the Batak ethnicity; and if gifts in general serve similar functions to ulos, then what separates the two? Besides their aesthetic design, what might make ulos uniquely Batak.

VII. The Heritage Conservation Department’s Approach: Industry and Culture United

The Heritage Conservation Department, in the Batak Center, inadvertently weighs in on the topic of *ulos*’ exclusive Batak-ness through its efforts to promote *ulos* to the rest of its nation. It draws upon the nation’s motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, “Unity in Diversity,” to configure *ulos* as one distinct part of greater Indonesian society. By drawing upon this mindset, the Heritage Conservation Department can foster national interest in *ulos* without pigeon-holing it into an international, very untraditional Batak, standard. Furthermore, by encouraging the Indonesian public’s investment in *ulos*, this department indirectly boosters the *ulos* economy. As a result, their actions hold great influence over the future of the *ulos* industry and economy, and in turn, they can alter the scope of *ulos* culture.

*a. Unity in Diversity and Dalihan Na Tolu: Parallels between the Two*

Bapak Johannes can speak more about *ulos*’ value as a cultural heritage of not only the Batak but of all Indonesians. He refers to the famous first motto of the Indonesian nation: “Unity in Diversity.” Specifically, he says that Indonesia’s motto is not “only jargon” but honestly representative of Indonesia’s current state of existence. Alongside the Batak peoples, there are many other ethnic groups and sub-ethnic groups and so on. Yet, they are altogether Indonesian, dwelling within Indonesian borders under the Indonesian government. Together, he claims they

50 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
all “share in the diversity” of Indonesia.51 Resonating with Edward Hutabarat’s claims that *ulos* should “suit all Indonesians and the international crowd alike,” this view indicates towards the multiplex heritage to which all Indonesians have a right. In this sense, all Indonesians are granted a right to share in each other’s unique ethnic heritage and to altogether make up the whole of Indonesia. The purpose of this mutual sharing, according to Bapak Johannes, is to foster open-mindedness between the ethnicities, which leads to respect.52 And as this paper has already established, respect is key to harmonious living.

In regard to the Batak, Bapak Johannes’ view parallels *ulos*’ philosophy and that of the *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which promotes *ulos* textiles as an appropriate item to fuel the government’s philosophy. To briefly remind, the *Dalihan Na Tolu* arranges interfamilial relationships in order to foster harmony and respect between two distinct lineages. On a smaller scale, *ulos*’ design and use in the *manglosi* (marriage) ritual affirm the essential importance of forging bonds between otherwise divided humans. Most significantly, as suggested by *ulos*’ aesthetics, each party is entitled to possessing their own unique qualities while simultaneously belonging to a unified whole. Sound familiar? *Ulos*’ philosophy and the principle “Unity in Diversity” strongly mirror one another. Both concern uniting a collection of diverse parts, and it is my perception that their similarity enables the Heritage Conservation Department to utilize *ulos*’ aesthetics within the parameters of nation.

51 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
52 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
b. “Ulos Fest”: A Place for Promoting Both Learning and Industry

One of the first steps that the Heritage Conservation Department must take in order to begin wrestling with the nation’s diversity is to first inform its public about ulos, and to establish a standard narrative about its designs and functions. As previously mentioned in this paper, my own informants were split over how to define ulos. While it is true that the Batak sub-ethnicities have great differences, I have seen this stark disunity occurring even on a small scale between the Toba Batak sub-ethnicity alone. Bapak Johannes and the Heritage Conservation Committee are aware of that. Through constructing an exhibition about ulos at the Jakarta National Museum titled “Ulos Fest” from 12-17 November, the committee intended to “unite Batak sub-ethnics on ulos,” and to “clear up confusions” about ulos’ meaning. Specific splits in opinion include the perception that ulos can only be used for traditional purposes only; others say ulos is for fashion only. The exhibition sought to mend the divide between these two opinions and used a national space—the Jakarta National Museum—to make their claims in the face of the nation, not just Batak. As a result, the exhibition establishes a standard national narrative about ulos’ history and culture, which demonstrates the Heritage Conservation Department’s greater ability to define each distinct part of Batak culture in the face of the whole Indonesian nation and government.

Another facet of “Ulos Fest” represents the government’s economic interests regarding ulos. Its support promotes the industry, demonstrating that the economy’s treatment of ulos is monumental to how it will be considered and utilized by later generations who are very concerned with their financial status. In addition to trying to foster learning about ulos, the

53 Johannes Marbun (Personal Communication, 19 November 2019).
exhibition provided a space for vendors. In the museum’s lower level was an assortment of small tables sporting traditional ulos textiles, as well as jackets, handbags, wallets, dresses, and much more with ulos motifs. At the time I visited November 17, the space was still bustling with people. As an effect of both the informational sessions at the exhibition and the publicity of the national museum, “Ulos Fest” provided the space to simultaneously establish a narrative and promote ulos’ economic relevancy. If the efforts of “Ulos Fest” can invest the public into ulos-culture and show that ulos industry is a worthwhile endeavor, then perhaps the youth, with their economically minded motivations, will take greater interest in ulos, participate in the industry, and wear ulos for themselves. It is a dynamic take on heritage conservation. By promoting the sale of a product, one consequently promotes its usage and continued existence. In the case of “Ulos Fest,” it both encourages the usage of ulos and ulos-esque items while fostering an understanding of ulos culture—which avoids some of the pitfalls of cultural appropriation for which Hutabarat failed to account.
VIII. Dissonances

a. Gender Inequalities within the Dalihan Na Tolu

For all of the Dalihan Na Tolu’s implications about gender balances, few to no sources that I have found discuss the bride’s experience. Unlike her husband, the bride does not experience a shift in social status when she marries because she holds the same title as her husband, boru. She does not become hula-hula, and as such, never adopts masculine characteristics to balance with the feminine. It is unclear exactly why she is left out of the narrative.

Because women are not directly included in the narrative, it heavily indicates that the duel-gendered nature of all humans is only a privilege that men may play out socially. Considering the context of the Toba Batak’s turbulent history, women’s apparent lack of status participation in the Dalihan Na Tolu may also indicate that men seemed the greater threat to social divisions, and as such, were the ones who needed to be kept in check by the Dalihan Na Tolu.

b. Limitations of the Study

It almost goes without saying that a month-long study could not represent such a huge, important part of Batak culture with perfect justice. Without having loads of time to study ulos’ history and modern usage—never mind my limited Bahasa Indonesia skills—I feel it my responsibility to acknowledge this limitation. Even with all the time in the world, I am not Batak, nor have I spent a significant portion of my life with ulos or living among the Batak. Therefore,
my claims and interpretations are especially subject to disagreement. I hope that I can make it clear that the findings of this study are rooted in limited experiences, and I wish to speak only to those experiences rather than on every aspect of Batak ulos culture. Everyone has an experience to contribute to the puzzle, but I suppose that you would have to interrogate the whole world to get the full picture.
IX. Conclusion: Hybridity versus Cultural Appropriation

Toba Batak *ulos* has occupied an uncertain place in modern industry and politics. Subject to much change, one of the foci of this study was to examine the deeper implications of such pressures to adapt. Due to *ulos*’ dynamic philosophy, its traditional ideals are not overly difficult to merge with more modern industrial products. In fact, its flexibility endows certain organization such as the Heritage Conservation Department to utilize the textiles in order to accomplish *ulos*’ original purpose to unite diverse human groups together in harmonious living. While *ulos* is used in such a way between Batak peoples, because its principles are universally applicable, it can be used to unite a whole nation together and even reach the international sphere.

However, there are some consequences to privileging industrial demands over traditional practice. For one, the modern machines used to mass produce *ulos* limit the weaver’s personal creativity and homogenize the textiles, diminishing its acknowledgement of essential human diversity. In addition, *ulos*’ diverse qualities are further toned down by its assimilation into global industries, such as the fashion industry. *Ullos* motifs are marked on international clothes in order to adapt to the foreign standard rather than both adapting to each other. The goal is not to mutually share in each culture’s diverse way of dressing and expressing themselves, but to assimilate *ulos* to maintain an international viewpoint on fashion standards.

These varying approaches on how to utilize *ulos* in response to multi-ethnic unification reflects upon the subject of hybridity between cultures and the subsequent concern about cultural appropriation. In the case of the international fashion industry, *ulos*’ motifs and patterns are used
for an international audience specifically, and according to my knowledge does not factor in the ulos’ importance to Batak traditional culture—or even the modernized version of it. The relationship between Batak ethnicity and international ethnicity is not mutual, because ulos’ design is assimilated into a dominant international form. As such, this approach cannot result in hybridity; it is walking into the territory of cultural appropriation for the sake of an economic edge.

The Heritage Conservation Department’s approach, however, manages to both support ulos industry and culture through events such as “Ulos Fest.” It’s quite simple how it accomplishes this: by encouraging both an interest for learning about ulos with an interest for buying ulos in tandem to support its artisans. By combining the interests of the consumer with the artist, this approach is more hybrid and less appropriative.

And on the question of which approach is more effectful? Well, hypothetically, the international approach discussed in this paper might lead to an increased usage of ulos, especially among the youth, but what good is the tradition, then, if its meaning is lost to the whims of fashion? Alternatively, the national approach may consider ulos tradition in tandem with industry, but are their efforts enough to sustainably hold the youth’s interests and increase ulos industry at the same time?

That remains to be seen. Although one thing is for certain: It is unreasonable to assume that one can choose between the two absolute views: either that ulos must adapt entirely for the sake of modernity or that ulos must remain exactly the same as it has always been for the sake of tradition. Neither approach is very effective to keeping ulos either relevant or culturally significant. In fact, ulos’ own hybrid nature indicates its own answer: a hybrid approach. Despite the opposing ideals on each side, perhaps by forging a hybrid between them can supporters of
ulos traditions successfully adapt to the shifting times while still maintaining its quality as a uniting force.
X. Suggestions for Further Study

Considering that this essay is focused upon the development of ulos in response to specific global pressure, then another avenue of research can be into how ulos developed during the Batak’s early tumultuous history. One could ask if ulos changed drastically at all during history, and if so, do those supposed changes reflect the historical patterns of interaction between the Batak sub ethnics? In my study, I have not mapped any historical alliances between the Batak—which if they have occurred, may reveal deeper clues into how the Batak forged bonds between each other. I think that the fact that the six subethnicities are so diverse from each other showcases that ulos can definitely exist between very different cultures.

Another aspect of Toba Batak ulos-culture that begs further study is on the aspect of gender. I touch upon this subject a bit during the Limitation section of my paper, and further research may reveal why the gender inequalities exist, and how might they persist or change during the modern day with all the shifts in economy.
XI. Bibliography

*Primary Sources*

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*Secondary Sources*


XII. Appendix

Fig. 1: Ibu Emmy and her husband’s *Ulos Ragi Hotang*, with *sirat* bordering the textile.
Fig. 2: An *Ulos Ragi Hotang* with *sirat* that sports the phrase “*horas jalabage.*” This *ulos* is displayed in TB Silalahi Batak museum.

Fig. 3: A drawn diagram of the tools used during the handweaving process of an *ulos* in Desa Meat.
Fig. 4: Photo of the traditional weaving method and tools at Desa Meat.

Fig. 5: A comparison of *Ulos Ragi Hotang* textiles. Right: A handwoven *ulos*. Left: *Ulos* produced by a machine loom.
Fig. 6: A typical ATM machine loom.

Fig. 7: A typical ATBM loom.