

# **Toba Batak *manang*: Notes on its uses and form**

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**Abstract** This paper offers a description of the multifunctional morpheme *manang* in Toba Batak (Austronesian; Sumatra) — as the disjunctive, the interrogative complementizer, and a particle forming *wh*-based polarity items — contextualized within the broader semantic and typological literatures on such meaning expressions. I then highlight a puzzle regarding its form: the form *manang* diverges substantially from its functional equivalent, *barang*, as described in H. N. Van der Tuuk’s pioneering grammar of Toba Batak (Van der Tuuk 1864–1867). I argue that consideration of this historical change supports the analysis of these various uses of *manang* as a case of functional polysemy, reflecting a common conceptual core.

**Keywords** Toba Batak; disjunction; interrogatives; indefinites; polysemy; sound change

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# 1 Introduction

This short paper investigates the various uses of the multifunctional expression *manang* in Toba Batak, an Austronesian language spoken in northern Sumatra, based primarily on my original elicitation work with four native speakers. *Manang* has broadly three uses in the language, exemplified in (1) below. *Manang* is the disjunctive ‘or’ in Toba Batak (1a). It is also used as a marker of embedded questions, corresponding to ‘whether’ in (1b). Finally, *manang* combines with *wh*-words to form free choice or negative polarity indefinites, for instance combining with *aha* ‘what’ in (1c) below to form an expression with use and distribution similar to English ‘anything.’

## (1) The various uses of *manang*:

### a. Disjunction:

Si Poltak man-jaha *manang* modom.

PN Poltak ACT-read MANANG sleep

‘Poltak is reading or sleeping.’

### b. Embedded question marker:

Ahu naeng mam-boto [*manang* (na) ro do si Poltak ].

1sg want ACT-know MANANG NA come FOC PN Poltak

‘I want to know [whether Poltak came or not].’

### c. *Manang wh* free choice or negative polarity indefinites:

Si Poltak (ndang) mang-allang *manang* aha.

PN Poltak NEG ACT-eat MANANG what

‘Poltak {eats / doesn’t eat} anything.’

The existence of functional expressions that cover multiple of the functions illustrated in (1) above is not surprising from a cross-linguistic perspective. For example, the disjunctive also serving as an interrogative clause-marking particle (uses a and b above) is attested in Japanese (see e.g. Uegaki 2018), Hausa (Austro-Asiatic > Chadic; see e.g. Zimmermann 2008), Hua (Papuan >

Goroka; Haiman 1980: §20.2.1), Kannada (Dravidian; Amritavalli 2003), Woleaian (Austronesian > Oceanic; Sohn 1975: §§6.3, 9.3), and various Slavic languages (see Borzdyko 2004 and citations there). Disjunctors with *wh*-words forming free choice or negative polarity indefinites (uses a and c above) is attested in a wide range of languages (see Haspelmath 1997, especially pp. 165–166), including Malagasy (see Paul 2005b,a). In addition, embedded interrogatives in many languages are similar in form to certain types of indefinites (uses b and c above), as per Haspelmath and König’s (1998) discussion of concessive conditionals versus non-specific free relatives. The recurrence of such overlap in function, attested in various unrelated languages of the world, has spawned a sizeable literature engaged in both historical, grammaticalization explanations (see especially Haspelmath 1997) as well as formal, compositional explanations (see e.g. Szabolcsi 2015; Uegaki 2018). My detailed description of these three uses of *manang* in Toba Batak, in section 2, will therefore contribute to the empirical base for these broader typological and formal literatures.

All three of these uses of Toba Batak *manang* are attested in various 20th century works on the language, starting with Meerwaldt 1904 and Warneck 1906, although none of these works offer any extensive descriptions. Notably, however, *manang* is entirely absent from the pioneering Van der Tuuk 1864–1867 grammar of Toba Batak. In its place is the form *barang*, attested with uses that correspond to all three senses of *manang* as exemplified in (1) above. In section 3, I discuss this puzzle and the sound change processes that relate *barang* with *manang*. I will conclude that this historical trajectory strongly motivates treating the diverse function word uses of *manang* as in (1) above as a case of polysemy.

## 2 Uses of Toba Batak *manang*

As outlined above, *manang* in Toba Batak has broadly three functions: as the disjunctor, a marker of embedded questions, and as an expression forming free choice and negative polarity indefinites from *wh*-words. I describe each in turn in this section, and then summarize these results in section 2.5.<sup>1</sup>

As background, I introduce a few salient aspects of Toba Batak grammar here. Like many western

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<sup>1</sup> A few examples of each use below will come from previous descriptive works on Toba Batak. The glosses for such examples are my own.

Austronesian languages of Indonesia, Toba Batak may be described as having a dominant predicate-initial syntax but with frequent subject topicalization, resulting in two dominant word orders that may be described as (Aux)VOS and S(Aux)VO; see for example Cumming 1984 and Erlewine 2018. Transitive verbs exhibit a two-way, non-valence-altering “voice” alternation, resulting in the mapping of grammatical functions as schematized in (2) below. There is no case marking on core arguments. The verb and object form a tight unit that I will descriptively refer to as the “predicate” here, indicated in (2) and corresponding to the VoiceP constituent in Cole and Hermon 2008. No material may intervene between the verb and object (Schachter 1984: 125, Erlewine 2018) and the two form a unit for the purposes of intonational phrasing (Emmorey 1984).

(2) **Dominant transitive word orders, with “predicate” in brackets:**

	“(Aux) [pred V O ] ... S ...”	“S (Aux) [pred V O ] ...”
a. Active:	Pat Ag	Ag Pat
b. Passive:	Ag Pat	Pat Ag

Verbal clauses without temporal auxiliaries or modifiers may be episodic or habitual descriptions of the past, present, or future. This temporal and aspectual flexibility will play a role in our discussion in section 2.4 below.

**2.1 Disjunction**

The first use of *manang* is as the canonical disjunctive in the language. In most dictionaries and other glossaries, the disjunctive function is the first or only use described for *manang*; this is the case in for example Warneck 1906: 124, 1977: 153–154 and Nababan 1966: 53, 1981: 86.

*Manang* can be used in statements as well as in questions. For instance, the example in (3) is a grammatical declarative utterance, but the same string could also be a question depending on the intonation. Here, I concentrate on declarative uses first and then return to questions below.

(3) **Disjunctive declarative:**

Di-inum si Poltak [tes *manang* kopi ].

PASS-drink PN Poltak tea MANANG coffee

‘Poltak {drank / drinks / is drinking} tea or coffee.’

The declarative in (3) is natural in a context where the speaker knows that Poltak drank, is drinking, or generally drinks (as the temporal interpretation is underspecified here) either coffee or tea. The speaker might be ignorant about whether the beverage in question is coffee or tea, or chooses to not specify for some other reason.

Where a *manang* disjunction is embedded under an intensional operator such as a modal or negation, the disjunction may take scope below or above the embedding operator. This leads to two different interpretations each for sentences such as (4) and (5).

(4) **Disjunction with modal ‘want’:**

Si Uli naeng mang-allang [pinasa *manang* honas ].

PN Uli want ACT-eat jackfruit MANANG pineapple

a. ‘Uli wants to eat either jackfruit or pineapple (either is fine).’ want > or

b. ‘Uli either wants to eat jackfruit or pineapple (but I don’t know which).’ or > want

(5) **Disjunction with negation:**

Si Poltak ndang mang-allang [pinahan *manang* lumbu ].

PN Poltak NEG ACT-eat pork MANANG beef

a. ‘Poltak eats neither pork nor beef.’ not > or

b. ‘Poltak either doesn’t eat pork or beef (but I don’t know which).’ or > not

Next we turn to the use of the disjunctor *manang* in questions. Here it is important to distinguish between two types of readings: a polar question that asks whether a disjunctive proposition is true or false and an *alternative question* which specifically asks which of the disjuncts is true

(see e.g. Moravcsik 1971; Biezma and Rawlins 2015).<sup>2</sup> Polar questions are indicated by a final rise (Emmorey 1984) whereas alternative questions are marked by pitch accents on each disjunct, similar to in English and many other languages (see e.g. Biezma and Rawlins 2015). In addition, two particles *na* and *do* are both more common in matrix questions, although not categorically ruled out in declaratives.<sup>3</sup>

(6) ***Manang* disjunction in questions:**

(Na) di-inum si Poltak (do) [tes *manang* kopi ]?

NA PASS-drink PN Poltak FOC tea MANANG coffee

‘{Does/did} Poltak drink tea or coffee?’ (polar question or alternative question)

Nababan (1966: 88–89) emphasizes that *manang* can disjoin phrases of various different sizes and lexical categories. In the examples here, we have seen *manang* disjoin two subjects in (3) and two objects in (4–5). Two predicates are disjoined in example (1a) in the introduction. Percival (1981) also gives an alternative question disjoining two full clauses, each with their initial *na*:

(7) **Alternative question disjoining two *na*-initial clauses:**

(Percival 1981: 102)

[Na gotap do ] *manang* [na di-gotap do ]?

NA break FOC MANANG NA PASS-break FOC

‘Did it break (by itself) or was it broken (by someone)?’

*Manang* and the second disjunct in an alternative question may appear to be separated from the first disjunct — for instance, if we consider *on* and *an* to be the disjuncts of *manang* in (8) below without the parenthetical material — but such examples are amenable to an analysis involving *manang* disjoining two full clauses with ellipsis in the second disjunct, as indicated here:

<sup>2</sup> Some authors use the term “choice question” to refer to alternative questions. See Karttunen 1977: 4 note 1, as well as Ariel and Mauri 2018. I concentrate on matrix questions here and discuss embedded questions in section 2.2 below.

<sup>3</sup> I discuss *na* further in section 2.2. On the use conditions of *na*-initial declaratives, see Erlewine 2018: 690. The most common position for *do* is immediately following the “predicate” as defined in (2), thus following the passive agent *Poltak* in (6); it cannot appear inside this predicate unit. See Jackson 1984 for more on the use and distribution of the focus particles *do*.

(8) **Alternative question from clausal disjuncts with ellipsis:** (based on Nababan 1966: 53)

[On do tuhor-on-mu ] *manang* [an (do tuhor-on-mu )]]?

PROX FOC buy-PASS.IRR-2sg MANANG DIST FOC buy-PASS.IRR-2sg

‘Are you going to buy this or that?’

In some languages, alternative questions have been argued to be sensitive to syntactic islands, in the sense that the disjunctive phrase cannot be embedded within a syntactic island (see e.g. Han and Romero 2004). Toba Batak appears to not be such a language, as exemplified by the grammaticality of (9) with the intended alternative question parse.

(9) **Alternative question with disjunction inside a syntactic island:**

(Nunga) di-tuhor ho [buku [<sub>RC</sub> na di-surat [si Poltak *manang* si Uli ]]]?

PERF PASS-buy 2sg book NA PASS-write PN Poltak MANANG PN Uli

‘Did you buy the book that Poltak wrote or the book that Uli wrote?’ (alternative question)

## 2.2 Embedded question marker

The second use of *manang* is as a marker that introduces embedded questions, in other words as an interrogative complementizer. First, we observe that *manang* is obligatory for embedded polar questions. This is illustrated by the contrast in (10) below: semantically, ‘know’ may take a declarative or interrogative complement, but *manang* is required for the embedded clause to be interpreted as a question.<sup>4</sup>

(10) **Obligatory *manang* on embedded polar question:**

- a. With *manang*: embedded polar question (based on Percival 1981: 110)

Ndang hu-boto [ *manang* (na) udan (do)].

NEG PASS.1sg-know MANANG NA rain FOC

‘I do not know [whether it’s raining].’

Speaker comment: It may or may not have rained.

b. Without *manang*: embedded declarative

Ndang hu-boto [na udan ].

NEG PASS.1sg-know NA rain

‘I did not know [that it’s raining].’

Speaker comment: It has definitely rained, but the speaker didn’t know before.

In contrast, embedded *wh*-questions and alternative questions can be introduced by an optional *manang*. Note in particular that (11b) expresses the same meaning as in (10a) above. The only difference is that the embedded clause in (11b) is formally an alternative question, with *manang* introducing “or not” at the end; correspondingly, the embedded-clause-initial *manang* is optional in (11b) but is obligatory for the embedded polar question in (10a) above.

(11) **Optional *manang* on embedded *wh*- and alternative questions:**

a. Embedded *wh*-question:

Hu-boto [(*manang*) ise (na) ro nantoari ].

PASS.1sg MANANG who NA come yesterday

‘I know [who came yesterday].’

b. Embedded alternative question; cf (10a):

Ndang hu-boto [(*manang*) na udan manang daong ].

NEG PASS.1sg-know MANANG NA rain MANANG NEG

‘I do not know [whether it’s raining or not].’

To summarize, *manang* is a marker for embedded questions which is obligatory for embedded polar questions and optional for *wh*- and alternative questions. We note that this use of *manang*

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<sup>4</sup> Unlike embedded polar questions, matrix polar questions cannot be introduced by *manang*:

- (i) (\**Manang*) (na) modom (do) si Poltak?  
MANANG NA sleep FOC PN Poltak  
‘Is Poltak sleeping?’



appears strictly at the edge of these embedded clauses, whereas *na* — which Silitonga (1973) calls a complementizer — consistently follows these clause-initial *manang* as well as the fronted *wh*-phrase in (11a). These facts indicate that *na* is structurally lower and not necessarily at the clause edge, as independently argued in Erlewine 2018.

### 2.3 *Manang wh* negative polarity indefinites

The third use of *manang* is as a particle that forms a phrase together with a *wh*-word, which together is a particular kind of nonspecific indefinite whose domain is determined by the *wh*-word. In this section, I discuss the use of *manang wh* phrases in negative polarity environments, as *negative polarity indefinites (NPIs)*. Interestingly, *manang wh* phrases also have free choice uses in certain non-negative environments as well, and therefore have an overall distribution similar to that of English *any*-phrases. I present these free choice uses in section 2.4 below.<sup>5</sup>

NPIs are often described as indefinites that must take scope under negation or a similar type of non-veridical, licensing operator (see e.g. Ladusaw 1979; Giannakidou 1998). This licensing requirement is clearly observed in existential constructions, as in (12).

(12) ***Manang wh* NPI requiring licensing negation:**

a. Ndang adong *manang aha* di-allang si Poltak.

NEG    EXIST    MANANG what PASS-eat    PN Poltak

‘Poltak didn’t eat anything.’

(literally: ‘There isn’t anything that was eaten by Poltak.’)

b. \*Adong *manang aha* di-allang si Poltak.

EXIST    MANANG what PASS-eat    PN Poltak

Intended: ‘There is something/anything that was eaten by Poltak.’

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<sup>5</sup> There is an ongoing debate in the literature as to whether items such as English *any*-phrases should be described as two different items — a polarity item and a free choice item — or as one. See Van der Auwera 2024 for a recent overview of the debate. My choice of terminology and organization here is purely a matter of organizational clarity, and to best situate the facts within current literature; it should not be read as reflecting support for an ambiguitist approach to *manang wh* over a uniform one.

Some NPIs must specifically be licensed by a clausemate negator. Toba Batak *manang wh* does not exhibit such a restriction, as observed in (13):

(13) **NPI licensed by non-clausemate negation:**

Ndang lomo roha-kku [buku [<sub>RC</sub> na di-tuhor *manang ise* ]].  
 NEG depend.on heart-POSS.1sg book NA PASS-buy MANANG who  
 ‘I don’t like [the book [<sub>RC</sub> that anyone bought]].’

*Manang wh* NPIs are also licensed in antecedents of conditionals, another downward-entailing environment. The modal *olo* in this example indicates a certain outcome, but I note that I cannot yet give a clear description for *olo*’s range of use.

(14) **NPI licensed in the antecedent of a conditional:**

Poltak developed an unfortunate disease...  
 Olo mate si Poltak, molo di-allang [*manang aha* ([<sub>RC</sub> na marlasiak ) ]].  
 MOD die PN Poltak if PASS-eat MANANG what NA spicy  
 ‘Poltak will die if he eats [anything ([<sub>RC</sub> that is spicy])].’

It is worth noting that the simple *wh*-words *aha* ‘what’ and *ise* ‘who’ do not have non-interrogative uses when bare; *manang* is required for the intended NPI use in (15) below. In contrast, *which*-phrases with *nadia* can be used as NPIs without *manang*, as in (16) below. I concentrate here on the behavior of NPIs formed with *manang* and simple *wh*-words here.

(15) **NPI use of simple *wh*-word requires *manang*:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>a. Ndang hu-tuhor <i>manang aha</i>.<br/>         NEG PASS.1SG-buy MANANG what<br/>         ‘I {didn’t / won’t} buy anything.’</p> | <p>b. *Ndang hu-tuhor <i>aha</i>.<br/>         NEG PASS.1SG-buy MANANG<br/>         Intended: same as (a)</p> |
|---|---|

(16) **Which-phrases function as NPIs without *manang*:**

Ndang hu-tuhor      [(\**manang*) buku *nadia* ].  
NEG    PASS.1SG-buy    MANANG book which  
'I didn't buy any book.'

The domain of a *manang wh* phrase can be specified using a *sian* 'from' phrase, as in (17), or using a relative clause as in (14).

(17) ***Manang wh* NPI with adjoined domain restriction:** (Percival 1981: 106)

Ndang boi [*manang ise sian nasida*] dapot-an      ibana,  
NEG    able    MANANG who from 3pl      find/get-PASS.IRR 3sg  
ala      ndang marbagas jolma tu begu.  
because NEG    marry      human to spirit  
'Neither of them can have her, because human beings do not marry spirits.'

*Manang wh* phrases can also be built from *wh*-words which are clearly (at least historically) morphologically complex. For example, Meerwaldt (1904: 77) gives *manang didia* 'wherever' [Dutch *waar ook*] and *manang tudia* 'to wherever' [Dutch *waarheen ook*]. The locative preposition *di* and dative preposition *tu* are clearly recognizable in the forms of the *wh*-words *didia* and *tudia*.

Finally, I note two optional processes that apply to *manang wh* NPIs. First, *manang wh* phrases can be fronted to a position above its associated negation: see example (18b) in relation to the in-situ variant in (18a). Second, *manang wh* NPIs can be optionally followed by the *pe* 'even' focus enclitic. No clear difference in meaning or use is detected related to either manipulation. Both of these optional processes also apply to free choice *manang wh* as well, as we discuss at the end of the next section.

(18) **Manang wh NPI can be fronted, bear *pe* ‘even’:**

a. Ndang di-allang si Poltak [*manang aha (pe)* ].

NEG PASS-eat PN Poltak MANANG what even

‘Poltak doesn’t/didn’t eat anything.’

b. [*Manang aha (pe)* ] ndang di-allang si Poltak \_\_\_\_.

MANANG what even NEG PASS-eat PN Poltak

‘Poltak doesn’t/didn’t eat anything.’

**2.4 Manang wh free choice items**

*Manang wh* phrases can also form “free choice” indefinites, which convey a meaning that does not and need not differentiate between individual referents within their domain.

First, consider the use of *manang aha* based on *aha* ‘what’ in the modal descriptions in examples (19) and (20) below. The examples convey that the speaker can or will eat something, no matter what it is, as reflected by the (a) translations. They cannot serve as simple narrow-scope or wide-scope indefinites, as reflected in (b–c) below. I will also present evidence that *manang wh* phrases are not universal quantifiers, below.

(19) **Manang wh under *boi* ‘able’:**

Boi hu-allang *manang aha*.

able PASS.1sg-eat MANANG what

a. <sup>ok</sup> ‘I can eat anything.’

b. \* ‘I can eat (something).’

c. \* ‘I can eat something...  
(but I don’t know what).’

(20) **Manang wh under *olo*<sup>6</sup>:**

Olo hu-allang *manang aha*.

MOD PASS.1sg-eat MANANG what

a. <sup>ok</sup> ‘I will eat anything.’

b. \* ‘I will eat (something).’

c. \* ‘I will eat something...  
(but I don’t know what).’

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<sup>6</sup> As I note above in the discussion of (14) above, the modal *olo* conveys certainty in these examples, but I cannot yet give a succinct description of its range of use, so I gloss it simply as MOD.

Sentences without temporal or modal auxiliaries allow for both habitual and episodic interpretations. This ambiguity is reflected in the translations for example (21a) below, limiting our attention to present time descriptions. Example (21b) shows that *manang wh* is incompatible with an episodic description, thereby forcing the sentence to have the generic/habitual interpretation, suggesting that the speaker is not a picky eater.

(21) ***Manang wh* forces habitual interpretation of auxiliary-less description:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Hu-allang    ambasang.<br/>             PASS.1sg-eat kuweni<br/>             i. <sup>ok</sup> ‘I (generally) eat kuweni.’<br/>             ii. <sup>ok</sup> ‘I am eating kuweni.’</p> | <p>b. Hu-allang    <i>manang aha</i>.<br/>             PASS.1sg-eat MANANG what<br/>             i. <sup>ok</sup> ‘I (generally) eat anything.’<br/>             ii. * ‘I am eating anything.’</p> |
|--|--|

The auxiliary *nunga* is frequently used for completed past time events with current relevance: see Mordechay 1984, 1986. I follow her terminology and gloss it as a type of perfect (PERF) here. A speaker can use *nunga* to describe eating everything that was at a recent party using the universal quantifier *sude* in (22a), but cannot use *manang aha* to express this or any similar meaning in (22b). However, the latter use improves if *manang aha* is further modified by a relative clause as in (22c), a commonly observed effect for free choice items in various languages also called *subtriggering* (see e.g. LeGrand 1975; Dayal 1995, 1998).

(22) ***Manang wh* incompatible with past event with *nunga*:**

Context: The speaker describes a potluck they recently attended.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>a. Nunga hu-allang    sude.<br/>             PERF    PASS.1sg-eat all<br/>             ‘I ate everything.’</p>  | <p>b. *Nunga hu-allang    <i>manang aha</i>.<br/>             PERF    PASS.1sg-eat MANANG what<br/>             Intended: ≈ ‘I ate anything.’</p> |
| <p>c. Nunga hu-allang    [<i>manang aha</i> [<sub>RC</sub> na di-lompa si Uli ]].<br/>             PERF    PASS.1sg-eat    MANANG what    NA PASS-COOK PN Uli<br/>             ‘I ate anything that Uli cooked.’</p> |   |

Free choice *manang wh* is also possible in imperatives. Here too, echoing the behavior of free choice items in other languages (see e.g. Horn 2000: 170–172, Giannakidou 2001: 660), we observe a clear difference between the imperative with a universal as in (23a) and the imperative with *manang wh* in (23b). The latter commands the addressee to eat something, but signals that they have “free choice” as to what is eaten. It certainly does not express a command to eat everything in the context.

(23) ***Manang wh* in imperatives:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>a. Allang sude!<br/>eat all<br/>'Eat everything!'</p> | <p>b. Allang <i>manang aha</i>!<br/>eat MANANG what<br/>'Eat anything!' ≠ (a)</p> |
|--|---|

Finally, I note that free choice *manang wh* phrases can be optionally fronted to preverbal position and optionally bear the *pe* ‘even’ enclitic. These possibilities directly parallel these possibilities with NPI *manang wh*, as shown in (18) above. Similar to the NPI cases, there is no discernible difference in meaning associated with fronting. With *pe* added, speakers report a domain-widening effect, with one speaker picking up a drinking glass and saying that the addition of *pe* in examples such as (24a,b) makes it sound as if Poltak eats such inedible things as well.

(24) ***Manang wh* free choice items can be fronted, bear *pe* ‘even’: cf (18)**

- a. Di-allang si Poltak [*manang aha (pe)* ].  
PASS-eat PN Poltak MANANG what even  
'Poltak eats anything.'
- b. [*Manang aha (pe)* ] di-allang si Poltak \_\_\_\_.  
MANANG what even PASS-eat PN Poltak  
'Poltak eats anything.'

Although fronting and the addition of *pe* ‘even’ appears to be optionally available for all *manang wh* constructions that I have tested in elicitation,<sup>7</sup> impressionistically it appears that both manipulations are more frequent with free choice uses than with NPI uses. It is also possible that such differences were more pronounced in the past. Warneck (1906, 1977) gives pairs with and without *pe* the German translations in (25), to which I have added English glosses below. The *irgend* form translations for *manang wh* without *pe* may be used as narrow-scope indefinites in NPI-licensing environments, whereas the *wh auch immer* forms used for *manang wh pe* are unambiguously free choice items.<sup>8</sup>

(25) **Warneck’s German translations for *manang wh* with and without *pe*:**

(Warneck 1906: 3, 124, 1977: 4, 154)

- |    |                   |                 |                      |                    |
|----|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| a. | <i>manang aha</i> | ‘irgend etwas’  | <i>manang aha pe</i> | ‘was auch immer’   |
|    |                   | [any something] |                      | [what also always] |
| b. | <i>manang ise</i> | ‘irgend jemand’ | <i>manang ise pe</i> | ‘wer auch immer’   |
|    |                   | [any somebody]  |                      | [who also always]  |

## 2.5 Summary

In the sections above, I have described the diverse uses of the functional expression *manang* in Toba Batak. Considerations of syntactic distribution — and likely corresponding categories — there are clearly three different uses of *manang* that must be distinguished, summarized here in (26):

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<sup>7</sup> Modulo independent syntactic restrictions on fronting. Among core arguments, only the subject can be fronted in simple clauses, which reflects a general restriction on preverbal fronting in the language; see Cole and Hermon 2008 and Erlewine 2018 for further discussion.

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation based on the German translations is complicated by the fact that *irgend* items also have free choice uses, with the addition of stress (see Haspelmath 1997: 245 ex. A6), as well as a so-called “epistemic indefinite” use that signals that the speaker does not know the referent (see *ibid.*: 47 ex. 101). See also Aloni and Port 2014 for an overview of uses in contemporary German. I thank Vera Hohaus (p.c.) for providing the English glosses in (25).

There is one piece of evidence suggesting that (the precursor to) *manang wh* phrases in 19th century Toba Batak did have an epistemic indefinite use. See footnote 11 below.

(26) **Three different *manang*:**

category	function
a. coordinator (§2.1)	disjunction, allowing for both logical disjunction uses and alternative question formation
b. complementizer (§2.2)	introduces interrogative embedded clauses; obligatory for embedded polar questions, optional for <i>wh</i> - and alternative questions
c. particle (§§2.3–2.4)	takes a simple <i>wh</i> -word and forms an indefinite with negative-polarity-licensed and free choice uses

What is the relationship between these three uses of *manang*? Should we think of them as deeply interrelated — synchronically, in the minds of speakers, and/or historically — or is this surface overlap at least partially accidental? Or, in other terms, is this a case of polysemy or homonymy?

One fact that suggests a deeper, diachronic connection between the complementizer and particle uses (26a,c) is the availability of adjunct unconditionals that antecede a pronoun (Rawlins 2013; also classified as a variety of concessive conditional: see Haspelmath and König 1998; Bossuyt 2023), as in example (27) below from Meerwaldt 1904. The unconditional adjunct here is introduced by *manang* and thus formally akin to an embedded *wh*-question, with the addition of the ‘even’ enclitic *pe* on *ise* ‘who.’

(27) **Unconditional adjunct with corresponding pronoun:** (Meerwaldt 1904: 77)

[*Manang ise pe man-dok songon i* ], ingkon sai pinsang-on-ku ibana.  
MANANG who even ACT-say like MED must always reject-PASS.IRR-1sg 3sg  
‘[Whoever said that], I will reprimand him.’  
[Dutch: *Wie zulks ook gezegd heeft, ik zal hem zeker berispen.*]

Unconditionals in many languages can be a source construction for free relatives by ellipsis of the relevant clausal description (see for example Bossuyt et al. 2018 on the German case). One possibility then is that the interrogative complementizer use (26b), which also appears in unconditionals,



led over time to the analysis of *manang wh* phrases as free choice and negative polarity indefinites (26c).<sup>9</sup>

As further evidence for the relationship between these three different *manang*, we might also wish to consider the form *manang* itself in descriptions of Toba Batak over time, as well as in descriptions of closely related languages. For instance, it would be valuable to know if, hypothetically, two different contemporary uses of *manang* had different forms in the past but have merged through processes of sound change. Addressing such questions leads us to an intriguing puzzle regarding the form *manang*, which we turn to next.

### 3 On the form of *manang* and its equivalents

In search of additional evidence that might shed light on the relationship between the different uses of *manang* in contemporary Toba Batak, in this section I turn to the historical record on the language. I conclude that such historical evidence gives us a strong motivation for the position that these three uses are indeed closely related to one another in the minds of speakers, as a case of functional polysemy rather than accidental homonymy.

#### 3.1 The puzzle of Van der Tuuk’s *barang*

Scholarly work on Toba Batak (at least in a Western tradition) starts with the work of H. N. van der Tuuk in the mid 19th century, which in many ways has still not been surpassed. Van der Tuuk’s grammar of Toba Batak was published in two parts in 1864 and 1867 (Van der Tuuk 1864–1867) and has subsequently been translated into English (Van der Tuuk 1971). The grammar is notable both for its depth and quality as well as its place in history, being one of the first comprehensive descriptive grammars of a language of the region. It is “a genuine pioneering effort” (Fox 1974) and “one of the most original grammars prior to the rise of modern linguistics... today a classic

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<sup>9</sup> However, a structure such as (27) could be analyzed as a *manang wh* free choice item (with a relative clause) in a fronted position, with a resumptive pronoun instead of a gap as in (24) above. Meerwaldt (1904) also reports another *manang*-initial utterance, which unambiguously involves the fronting of an embedded interrogative clause:

- (i) [*Manang* na adong manang na soada ], ndang olo paboa-on-na \_\_\_\_.  
 MANANG NA EXIST MANANG NA NEG.EXIST NEG MOD tell-PASS.IRR-3sg  
 ‘[Whether it is there or it is not there], he/she will not say.’  
 [Dutch: *Of er nog voorhanden is of niet, hij wil het niet zeggen.*] (Meerwaldt 1904: 101)

that can be mined for much useful information” (Blust 2013: 76). I highlight these qualities to help convey my surprise when I found not a single use of *manang* in the grammar.

All three uses of contemporary *manang* can be found in Van der Tuuk 1864–1867 associated instead with the form *barang*. Here below, I quote from and give page numbers for the 1977 English translation, but I also give section numbers which have been maintained between the translation and the original works.<sup>10</sup>

(28) ***Barang* as disjunctor:**

“*Barang*... is used as a disjunctive conjunction” (§163; p. 316)

a. halak na tubu [anak-na *barang* boru-na ] (§150; p. 236)

person NA be.born child-POSS.3sg BARANG girl-POSS.3sg

‘someone whose son or daughter has been born’

See also (29c) below.

(29) ***Barang* as an embedded question marker:**

“In indirect questions, the auxiliary *barang* is placed before the interrogative.” (§147; p. 227)

a. Embedded *wh*-question: (§147; p. 227)

Sungkun na muse [*barang* piga pinggan ninna (<*ning-na*) ].

ask 3sg again BARANG how.many plate PASS.say-3sg

‘Ask him again how many plates he says there should be.’

b. Embedded polar question: (§147; pp. 227–228)

Sungkun jolo ... [*barang* na olo do au tubu-an anak ].

ask first BARANG NA OLO FOC 1sg be.born-APPL.PASS.IRR child

‘First ask... [whether or not a son will be born to me].’

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<sup>10</sup> The glossing and translations are my own, informed by the translations in the original Dutch and its English translation, in consultation with a native speaker. Minor changes have been made to match current spelling conventions.

- c. Embedded alternative question: (§153, p. 256)

... asa hu-boto hami [*barang* na tar-ula *barang* na so  
 so.that PASS.1sg-know 1pl.EXCL BARANG NA PASS.POT-WORK BARANG NA NEG  
 tar-ula ].  
 PASS.POT-WORK

‘...so that we know [whether it can be carried out or not].’

(30) ***Barang wh* indefinites:**

“*Barang* is also used before the interrogative so that the latter can function as an indefinite pronoun, in order to allude to things of which the speaker knows nothing...” (§147; p. 228)

- a. Negative polarity indefinite: (§165; p. 347)

... [*barang* sadia nimmu (<*ning-mu*>)] indadong hu-jua-hon.  
 BARANG how.much PASS.say-2sg NEG PASS.1sg-refuse-APPL

‘I will refuse however much you say it is.’

- b. Free choice indefinite: (§147; p. 228)

[*Barang* si aha lomo roha-m ] baen gowar ni anak-ta i.  
 BARANG PN what depend.on heart-POSS.2sg make name GEN child-POSS.1pl MED

‘Whatever name you like (lit. depending on your heart), give as the name of our child.’

These quotations and examples clearly show that *barang* as reported in Van der Tuuk 1864–1867 has all three of the functions of contemporary Toba Batak *manang*, including the different subtypes described in section 2 above.<sup>11</sup> It is also worth reiterating that the form *manang* is not mentioned there, even though the grammar is filled with notes on variant forms across different dialects of Toba

<sup>11</sup> In addition, there is at least one example of a *barang wh* indefinite which is quite clearly not an NPI or free choice indefinite, but likely instead an epistemic indefinite (see note 8):

- (i) Hu-rimpu do [*barang* ise ] nangkin, hape ho do. (§147; p. 228)  
 PASS.1sg-realize FOC BARANG who just.now but 2sg FOC  
 ‘Just now I noticed someone or other (unknown to me), but it was you.’

Batak<sup>12</sup> as well as in related languages. (See also I will return to the question of whether Van der Tuuk knew of the form *manang* in the following section.) In contrast, 20th century descriptions of Toba Batak use the form *manang* for all of its contemporary uses, even including the earliest works of Meerwaldt 1904 and Warneck 1906.<sup>13</sup> In fact, no 20th century works mention *barang* with any of these functions in Toba Batak. The speakers I have consulted also do not recognize *barang* as a function word,<sup>14</sup> although some examples from Van der Tuuk could be read and understood by my speakers by replacing *barang* with *manang*.

*Barang* and similar forms with at least some of the uses of Toba Batak *manang/barang* described here are also widely attested across a range of western Austronesian languages of modern Indonesia and the Philippines; see the entry for *baraŋ*<sub>1</sub> in the Austronesian Comparative Dictionary (Blust et al. 2023): <https://acd.clld.org/cognatesets/25167> (last access 18 December 2024). This evidence strongly supports the view that *barang* is indeed the more conservative, original form, which has subsequently been replaced wholesale by *manang* in Toba Batak.

This substantial and apparently sudden change in form between Van der Tuuk’s 19th century *barang* and the 20th century and contemporary *manang* is an intriguing puzzle. At the same time, I argue that this documented shift in form provides strong evidence for the hypothesis that the three uses of *manang* are closely linked in the minds of Toba Batak speakers. As I have highlighted above, at least three distinct uses must be posited based on basic considerations of syntactic distribution and category membership, each corresponding to meanings which, in various other languages of the world, *could* overlap in form, but certainly need not. The fact that this shift in form from *barang* to *manang* — whatever the nature of this change — targeted all uses equally and apparently simultaneously strongly supports their description as a case of functional polysemy, rather than any

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<sup>12</sup> This knowledge was acquired based on his extensive and pioneering travel throughout Batak land. See pp. xviii–xix in the preface to the 1971 translation of his grammar.

<sup>13</sup> Meerwaldt (1904: 77, 101) mentions *barang* as the Angkola form corresponding to the function word *manang* in Toba Batak. Angkola is a closely related Batak language spoken south of the Toba zone (see e.g. Eggink 1936; Adelaar 1981; Billings and McDonnell 2024). Eggink’s Angkola and Mandailing dictionary indeed gives *barang* with these uses (p. 31), but no *manang*. The 1977 revised edition of Warneck’s 1906 dictionary also notes that *barang* is the Angkola form of *manang*, (Warneck 1977: 28); however, this note is absent in the original, Warneck 1906 (see page 24), suggesting that it was added here by the editors, perhaps incorporating the information from Meerwaldt.

<sup>14</sup> *Barang* has an additional use as a content word meaning ‘thing’ or ‘goods,’ which does appear throughout.

accidental homonymy. I turn next to the nature of this change in form.

### 3.2 From *barang* to *manang*

As a matter of sound change, the apparent shift from *barang* to *manang* is striking in two related ways. First, although the two forms do share an overall shape, the apparent change could not be due to a single sound change. The segments (initial) *b* and (medial) *r* are also plentiful in the contemporary language.

Here too, we benefit from Van der Tuuk’s detailed body of work on the language from the 19th century. First, I consider the entries in his *Bataksch-nederduitsch Woordenboek* (Van der Tuuk 1861), published before the appearance of the grammar. The dictionary includes a rich entry on *barang* (p. 374) with descriptions that align with all three of the uses I have described above for *barang* and contemporary *manang*. But there is also an entry for *manang* (p. 417), reproduced in (31) below with its transcription, which refers to *barang* as well as to the form *malang*. The entry for *malang* (p. 421) in turn refers back to *barang* and *manang*.

(31) **Manang entry in Van der Tuuk 1861: 417:**

∞ ̄o I. (vgl. ∞ ← I.) = ∞ ⇒

‘manang I. (cf. malang I.) = barang’

Second, Van der Tuuk’s grammar includes discussion of various phonological processes in the language (§§30–31), including comments on various phones in apparent free variation or possible sound changes in progress. Three of these observations are of note here, summarized in (32) below. Again, quotations and page references come from the 1977 English translation.

(32) **Relevant phonological processes noted in Van der Tuuk 1864–1867:**

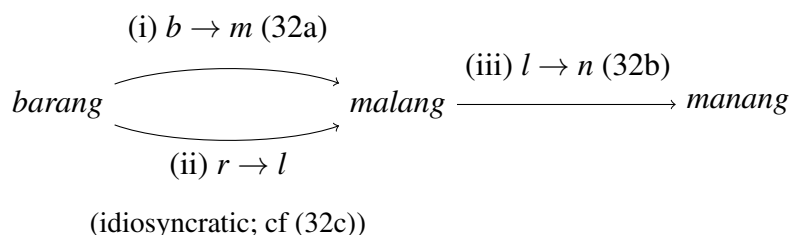
- a. “Very frequently *m* and *b* are interchanged, especially as beginners of lighter syllables or of words of more than three syllables... As beginners of dissyllabic words, they are interchanged in, among other words, *marus* = *barus*, *milas* = *bilas*; in *balam* = *malam*, and *muda*, from *buda*...” (pp. 66–67)
- b. “The *l* and the *n*... are often interchanged under the influence of a nasal, especially in

words in which a syllable is closed with *ng*, e.g. *unang* = *ulang* (Dairi and Mandailing), *tonang* = *tolang*, *libung* = *nibung* (Malay)...” (p. 62)

- c. “Sometimes words undergo a change that is against the applicable rule, e.g... *simpalah* - juice, from the flesh of a coconut, must have come from *simparah*...” (p. 75)<sup>15</sup>

Taking these clues together, I propose that the early form *barang* shifted to *manang* during the 19th century, through the combination of three sound changes, schematized in (33) below. All three segmental replacements are independently attested in the language, as described by Van der Tuuk (1864–1867) in (32), although change (ii) from *r* to *l* must be lexically idiosyncratic.

(33) **Proposed sound changes from *barang* to *manang*:**



As indicated here, changes (i) and (ii) could apply in either order to derive the attested intermediate form, *malang* (31). However, a more realistic understanding is perhaps not to treat these three sound changes as necessarily ordered in time, except for the application of (ii) which feeds (iii). The evidence is compatible with all three sound changes in (33) being separate, active processes with variable application in Toba Batak of the 19th century, with *malang* and *manang* being just two variant realizations of the original *barang*.

To recap, entries in Van der Tuuk’s dictionary (Van der Tuuk 1861) suggests that at least three variant forms — the canonical *barang*, as well as *manang* and *malang* — coexisted for this one polysemous function word in the mid 19th century. However, the forms *malang* and *manang* must have been sufficiently rare or otherwise considered non-standard at that time, such that he chose not to include any mention of the *manang* and *malang* variants in his grammar, despite his many notes on variant phonological forms in the language and its neighbors. In the second half of the

<sup>15</sup> See also Adelaar 1981 pp. 16–17, ex. 103 for another case of *r~l* variation in Toba Batak, and exx. 106–108 for other examples within the family.

19th century, the relative frequency of these variants shifted drastically, to the extent that *manang* is the only recognized form for this function word in the 20th century: again, as early as the turn-of-the-century dictionaries of Meerwaldt 1904 and Warneck 1906, through Vergouwen 1933/1964 and Voorhoeve 1940, and onto more contemporary works.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

I conclude by again reiterating the relevance of these changes for our understanding of the diverse functions of the Toba Batak form *manang*, and its earlier form *barang*. When multiple phonological variants for *barang* were simultaneously in use, in the 19th century, there could have been an opportunity to conventionalize separate forms for the different uses of *barang*. We know that many words did not undergo the sound changes in (32) and (33), so the application of these changes and their conventionalization could have distinguished conceptually distinct but homophonous lexical items. Such differentiation could have also been encouraged if, hypothetically, some of these sound changes were more frequent in application depending on their syntactic environment: for example, utterance or clause initially versus medially in the case of conjunction. The fact that no such differentiation occurred — that the full, complex range of function word uses for *barang* is now associated wholesale with the form *manang* — strongly supports the polysemy account and, in turn, attempts at formal and conceptual unification of these various uses.

## Abbreviations

- Verbal morphology: ACT = active, PASS = passive; APPL = applicative, POT = potential, IRR = irrealis
- Demonstratives: PROX = proximal (*on*), MED = medial (*i*), DIST = distal (*an*) (see Fox 1984)
- Auxiliaries: MOD = (underspecified) modal (see note 6), PERF = perfect (see discussion above (22))
- PN = proper name article, FOC = focus, NEG = negation, RC = relative clause



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