

A BATAK LITERATURE OF MODERNIZATION*

Susan Rodgers Siregar

In a gathering of Batak village grandmothers in my house in 1976 to tape record some traditional ritual speech, one old *ompu*¹ took the time to survey the changes in Batak kinship she had witnessed in her lifetime. Like many of her contemporaries, she spoke warmly of the "more orderly" kinship world of her childhood, when people "still married who they should." She contrasted this halcyon age to present-day conditions: young people were marrying against the grain of the adat, households were ignoring their adat obligations to lend labor assistance to relatives in favor of concentrating on their own fields and farmwork, and her neighbors were beginning to forget some of the courtly eulogistic terms once used in addressing kinsmen. Fixing me with a stare and breaking out of her customary Angkola Batak² into Indonesian, she delivered a final withering epithet on modern-day Batak family life: just one quality characterized it, "Merdeka di segala-gala--Freedom in everything!"

Change in the Angkola Batak kinship system in the last seventy to eighty years has indeed been considerable. Many of these changes have been reflected in Batak literature, which, in turn, has influenced the process. In fact, Batak oral and written literature has served the Batak as a medium for reformulating their kinship system in a time of rapid educational improvements, migration out of the ethnic homelands, and increasing contact with other ethnic societies and Indonesian national culture. In this paper I would like to investigate the relationship between Angkola Batak kinship and its locally authored literature as the society has modernized, focusing in particular on the subjects of courtship and marriage. To do this I have selected three examples from Angkola literature, the first oral and the others written, ranging from ritual adat speech in Angkola Batak to modern Indonesian fiction. All the texts involve dialogues between men and women who are marriageable matrilineal cross cousins.³ This pivotal social relationship in Batak society is portrayed

* I would like to thank Richard McGinn of the Ohio University Linguistics Department who read an earlier draft of this paper.

1. *Ompu* or *ompung* is the general Angkola kin term of reference and address for a person's grandparents. The words also have the connotation of "ancestor."
2. "Angkola" is a general ethnic and regional designation sometimes used to describe the Batak populations between the Mandailing Batak near the Minangkabau border and the Toba Batak near Lake Toba. Angkola has several fairly distinct subpopulations separated locally along lines of perceived differences in ceremonial adat practice, accent, "innate character," and dress and decoration; these subgroups are roughly the traditional *harajaon* or adat rajaship domains of Angkola Julu, Angkola Jae, Padang Bolak, and Sipirok. In this paper, I follow the practice used in much literature on the Batak and label the entire area "Angkola," since many of the local lines of distinction are not significant here.
3. The ideal marriage "in the adat" links a young man and the daughter of his

differently in the different types of literature considered here. Changes in the forms and content of these dialogues document a major symbolic shift in the Angkola's definition of marriage, and, in fact, their understanding of human social interaction itself. Before looking at Angkola literature, however, it is necessary to explain the somewhat forbidding kinship system of this southern Batak society.

Like all Batak societies, the Angkola have a Kachin-type kinship system⁴ built around the twin organizational themes of patrilineal clan descent and asymmetrical marriage alliance. In schematic form, if not always in practice, the Angkola system works this way: Each named clan or *marga* is composed of a number of lineage segments (*kahanggi*), said to be of five to ten generations in depth, which see themselves as patrilineal descendants of a common male ancestor, set of brothers, or close lineagemates. The *kahanggi*, like the larger *marga*, are exogamous. *Kahanggi* of different clans are linked together in enduring political and economic partnerships through marriage alliance. Each *kahanggi* can contract two basic sorts of alliance through marriage. First, it can accept brides from another *kahanggi* and become that donor group's subservient *anakboru* ("daughters"). Ritually, the bride-giving *kahanggi* are spiritually superior to the bride-receiving group. Second, the focal *kahanggi* can itself give brides to other, subservient *kahanggi*, whereby they become *mora* ("wealthy") to that receiver group. *Mora* are responsible for the spiritual health and human and agricultural fertility of their *anakboru* partners. Taken as an entire system, all focal groups are *anakboru* or bride-receivers to some *kahanggi*, and *mora* or bride-givers to other *kahanggi*. The system is asymmetrical in that a *kahanggi* should not give its sisters and daughters as brides to a *kahanggi* that has served as a bride-provider in the past. For marriage-alliance purposes *kahanggi* are identified with their respective ancestral villages and each new marriage can serve to bind territorial groups together (Angkola kinship encourages *anakboru/mora* marriages both within a single village and between villages).

This basic triadic relationship of benevolence, gift-giving, supplication, and respect was used to structure many aspects of the political and economic life of traditional Angkola villages.⁵ The families of the *raja* (village chiefs) maintained political support outside their *kahanggi* by contracting astute marriages with a large number of *anakboru* and *mora*. Also, each village household could turn to a range of affines as well as lineagemates to lend them labor assistance during the

tulang, his mother's brother. One generation ago, the young man's father found a bride from a certain household; ideally, once a marriage alliance of this sort is forged, the families should not let it lapse in the coming generations. Therefore, when the first couple's son reaches marriageable age, he is encouraged to "retrace his father's footsteps," and go to the household from which his mother originally came to find his own bride, i.e., the household of his mother's brother. This is a *manyunduti* marriage, a marriage in which one of the partners has repeated an alliance formed in the past.

4. This marriage system, important in highland Southeast Asia, has been described by Edmund Leach. See his "Structural Implications of Matrilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage," in Edmund Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone Press, 1961), pp. 54-104.

5. For a detailed ethnographic description of a structurally similar system in the Toba Batak region, see J. C. Vergouwen's classic *The Social Organization and Customary Law of the Toba Batak of Northern Sumatra* (1933; *Het Rechtsleven der Toba-Batak*), trans. Jeune Scott-Kemball (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964).

more arduous parts of the wet-rice agricultural year. During the village grandmother's life, however, there have been several major types of changes in this system.

At the turn of the century, the village government of the Angkola Batak region was headed by indigenous raja and based largely on kinship ties--a system which was encouraged by the Dutch as a handy mechanism for insuring peace and cooperation. Since the national revolution of 1945-49, however, a headman or *kepala kampung* form of village administration plus the thoroughgoing penetration of the national military and civil bureaucracy into Tapanuli has emptied the old raja form of government of much of its political power. Angkola kinship has suffered a corresponding diminution of influence. Economically, too, Angkola kinship has lost ground, with many of the labor exchanges and ritual obligations for monetary and material assistance between households having fallen into disuse over the last several decades.

At an internal level, as a system of family relationships, Angkola kinship has also changed in important ways. The salient unit in marriage alliance, as far as it can be reconstructed from present-day accounts, was once the kahanggi itself. That is, an entire kahanggi would act as anakboru to another entire kahanggi, and so on. Today, the level of alliance has shrunk in many villages and towns from the large kahanggi unit to sublineages of this, and in some cases to individual households. For example, there are cases today where Household a of Kahanggi A received a bride in one generation from Household b of Kahanggi B. In the following generation, a girl from another household of Kahanggi A was given as a bride to another household of Kahanggi B. The kinsmen in question today often defend such arrangements by saying that "it's all right as long as the exchange is not between the same households."

The types of marriages Angkola Batak are contracting are changing in other ways. Many Batak now live in cities outside the ethnic homeland and come into contact with other Indonesian ethnic groups;⁶ significant numbers of Angkola marriages today are with Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese, and so on, a circumstance that plays havoc with the traditional preferential marriage system encouraging young men to wed their mothers' brothers' daughters.

Religious pressures have also forced changes in Angkola kinship. Approximately 90 percent of the Angkola population is Muslim, and the rest are Protestant Christian (there are a few Catholics but most of these are Chinese Indonesian migrants). Though Muslims and Christians generally get along rather amicably with an air of "unity in the adat," religiously mixed marriages among the Angkola Batak are usually considered a disaster by both sides. The pressure not to marry someone of the other religion is so strong, in fact, that some families will encourage a young person to pass over a matrilineal cross cousin (the perfect marriage choice in the adat) for someone else if that cousin happens to be of the "wrong" religion. This is a common occurrence: many area kahanggi include both Muslims and Christians, and occasionally a set of siblings is divided along religious lines. Religious restrictions of this sort have altered the concept of marriageable relatives in important ways. (In the case of the outspoken ompu's own kahanggi, a conversion of the village raja family to Christianity in late colonial times has made that group's anakboru/mora relations to other area raja lines especially complex.)

6. Edward M. Bruner, "Urbanization and Ethnic Identity in North Sumatra," *American Anthropologist*, 63, 3 (June 1961), pp. 508-21, and Bruner, "Kin and Non-Kin," in *Urban Anthropology*, ed. Aidan Southall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 373-92.

Another quite significant change in the kinship system can be seen in the reasons couples cite for marrying: Angkola marriage today is coming to be seen as primarily a union of two individuals who choose each other as life partners. This contrasts with an older understanding of Angkola marriage as primarily a seal on a political alliance between two kahanggi.

Many of these changes are reflected in everyday Angkola speech. The village grandmother cited above is not alone in her outspoken criticism of Batak family life. Elderly homeland Batak especially are much given to standing back from the flow of social life to comment on the kinship system *as a system* and lament its present state of "disarray." Their ability to distance themselves in this way may be in large part a result of the creation of Indonesia as a multiethnic state within their lifetimes: Tapanuli Batak are well aware that their homeland is just one small constituent ethnic unit of a state made up of hundreds of such units. They see each homeland as having a separate adat, and, thus, a distinct kinship system. Seeing this plurality of Indonesian kinship worlds, they are able to appreciate the parochial nature and systemic quality of Angkola Batak kinship.

As the Angkola kinship system has changed, so have its adat rituals. The form and oratorical content of the wedding and birth rituals, for instance, are today beginning to accommodate once-disallowed marriages (marriages to non-Batak and marriages uniting households and lineages that once could not become anakboru/mora partners according to strict adat). Angkola literature, however, is perhaps the richest source for understanding kinship change. The southern Batak are inveterate *tukang kata-hata*, wordsmiths, adepts with the spoken and written word, and they produce prodigious quantities of literature on kinship themes.

Angkola literature is of several types, and, for the moment at least, all types exist simultaneously. There is an oral adat literature in Angkola Batak, and a modern literature written mostly in Indonesian, the national language. There is also a small modern fictional literature in Angkola Batak.

The still abundant oral literature includes many stylized verbal duels between wife-giving and wife-taking groups, verse from traditional political orations delivered by ceremonial raja, and eerie dirges sung at funerals.⁷ The oral literature stretches in complexity from the *kobar* orations delivered at all major adat gatherings (speeches well within the competence of any married adult reared in the homeland) to the seven-night-long *turi2an* chants (story poems of mythic proportions, spun out in an arcane vocabulary and known only to a few ritual specialists). Kinship is the major topic of this adat literature. Adat orators eulogize the anakboru/mora relationship in a thousand formulaic phrases and pantun; Angkola mourning songs are sung to departed kinsmen, and often the kin relationship itself becomes the subject of the dirge. The *turi2an* myths concern marriages between inhabitants of this world and their mora of a heavenly Upper World inhabited by raja.⁸ The

7. Tape transcripts and English translations of a number of these genres of Angkola speech are available in Susan Rodgers, "Angkola Batak Kinship through its Oral Literature" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978).

8. An exquisite Mandailing *turi2an* was published under Dutch auspices in 1938; it is the *Turi2an ni Radja Gorga di Langit dohot Raja Soeasa di Portibi*, related by Mangaradja Goenoeng Sorik Marapi Nasution (Medan: Mimbar Umum, 1957). Other southern Batak adat works in print include Baginda Marakub Marpaung and B. R. Sohuturon, *Pundjut-pundjutan* (Medan: Islamyah, 1961), a collection of adat proverbs with detailed *explication du texte* commentary; Paruhum Harahap, *Horja Godang: Mangupa di na Harsan Boru, Horas Tondi-Madingin, Sayur Matua Bulung* (privately

standard village kobar speech is primarily a stylized form of communication between kinsmen who are party to the ritual being performed. In other words, in virtually all Angkola oral adat literature, kinship serves to structure the social relationship between speaker and audience and provides the main focus of the oratory. Angkola adat speech does allow the individual orator considerable freedom to ad lib part of his speech and interject his own *komentar* (commentary) into the flow of ritual verses. Given this aesthetic elasticity of the oral adat art, many Angkola today are interjecting comments on recent kinship changes into their adat speeches.

Angkola's extensive modern literature also takes kinship as a central motif and plot device. Plots about arranged marriages are common; family disputes and kin-based factionalism animate many stories and novels. Like the Minangkabau region to the south, the southern Batak homelands have produced a steady stream of writers since the late colonial period. Modern southern Batak literature ranges from Willem Iskander's subtly political children's primer, *Siboeloes-boeloes Siroemboek-roemboek*, a Mandailing Batak work first published in 1872, to the short stories and novels of Mochtar Lubis, a Mandailing Batak who of course writes in Indonesian. Armijn Pane, the author of the pathbreaking psychological novel *Belenggu*, was himself from a Sipirok Batak family; his brother Sanusi was an accomplished poet and his father Soetan Pangoerabaan was a novelist and essayist writing in Angkola Batak. Abu Arab Siagian wrote several novelettes in Angkola Batak after the national revolution, and Merari Siregar has written novels in Indonesian about Batak life.⁹ Many southern Batak writers in the last ten years have been using newspapers as a major outlet for their works. Fiction written in Angkola Batak is moribund, but the Batak-dominated Medan dailies frequently publish soap opera-like novels in Indonesian in installment form. These overheated tales are often written by southern Batak and concern Batak matters.

The texts I have chosen range from adat speech to Angkola fiction to Indonesian fiction, and mark changes in the way the Angkola view and talk about the relationship between men and women who, in adat terms, are ideal marriage partners.

Ritual Adat Speech: Martandang Courtship

The first text, which I have translated from Angkola Batak, is taken from a recital of martandang ritual courtship speech. Martandang talk is an example of Angkola's highly stylized oral adat tradition. The courtship conversation is spoken by matrilineal cross cousins, and the theme and form of the verbal exchange partakes of the coy, covertly aggressive relationship between these two role positions in Batak kinship. As formally set out in the adat, the mother's brother's daughter/father's sister's son pair (*pareban* to each other) are joined in an obligatory joking relationship; that is, whenever they meet, their language should not be that of normal conversation but rather of roundabout insults, accusations, and jokes. Each can take great license with the other, verbally teasing the joking partner and

published: Padangsidempuan, 1980); and Baginda Marakub Marpaung, *Jop ni Roha Pardomuan: Paradaton Tapanuli Selatan* (Padangsidempuan: Pustaka Timur, 1969).

9. Willem Iskander, *Siboeloes-boeloes Siroemboek-roemboek, Sada boekoe basaon* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1872); Armijn Pane, *Belenggu*, 5th ed. (Jakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1961); Soetan Pangoerabaan, *Tolbok Haleon* (Sipirok: privately published [1930?]); Abu Arab Siagian, *Magodang Aek Marali Tapanian* (Padangsidempuan: Pustaka Timur, 1955); Merari Siregar, *Azab dan Sengsara, kisah kehidupan seorang anak gadis*, 3rd ed. (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1958).

making him laugh.¹⁰ In fact, the speakers never break out of the ritualistic joking mode in traditional martandang speech, and from it a particular definition of the pareban relationship can be recovered. In these texts, any individual characteristics of the pair are almost totally submerged in the structural dynamics of their obligatory joking relationship.

In its full traditional form, martandang courtship involved several steps. First, the boy would settle on an eligible girl, ideally the daughter of one of his actual or classificatory *tulang* (mother's brothers). The boy would invite along several friends who also had *boru tulang* (daughters-of-tulang) in the girl's village, and the group would then set off en masse for the target village. This journey was normally made under cover of darkness; martandang courtship as a whole in fact had a conspiratorial air to it. Coming to the outer rim of the village, the boys would be met by a group of local boys patrolling the area to "protect their sisters." The visitors would have to convince the village guardians that they did indeed stand in a marriageable kin relation to the girls. This done, the visiting delegation would fan out to the various houses of their would-be sweethearts. The girls at this point should be "sleeping" unsuspectingly in their parents' homes. Most, however, would have been tipped off by friends that a martandang session was in the offing. The little brothers and sisters of the girls should also be sleeping but more commonly they would be hovering close by, remaining conscientious snoops throughout the martandang talk. The elders would generally approve of this in a vague way as a good introduction to the *adat ni na poso2* (the adat of young unmarried people).

The actual martandang speech would begin once the boy had crawled under the house and whispered a greeting to the girl through the floorboards. She would answer back, and the pair would converse in 4-line pantuns until the boy had to sneak back to his home village before dawn broke. Some martandang pairs were not literally separated by the floorboards, but were allowed to meet on a porch, and some martandang conversations took place outside the village. "According to adat" no physical contact between the pair should take place, but, like many Angkola adat pronouncements, this one may have existed to be broken.

Martandang-style courtship was last practiced during the youth of Sipirok's current generation of grandparents. Today's teenagers in the homeland villages snicker at anything so mannered and roundabout as martandang verses. Speech between today's adolescents is free of many of the ritual strictures that bound the youthful conversations of their grandparents, and young people today prefer to say things "straight out" (*langsung bicara*) when talking to their peers of the opposite sex. The following dialogue, then, was not taken from life but is part of a long story poem made up by a Sipirok raja, Ompu Raja Doli Siregar, and dictated to me as part of my research in 1975. Martandang dialogue can be spoken with fluency by few southern Batak today, and most who do control the genre are old people like this raja. The fact that this form of speech has virtually disappeared delivers a cultural message in itself: martandang verses and their associated stylized courtship etiquette are things of the village past. The reconstructed dialogue goes as follows:

10. There is a large anthropological literature on joking relationships. One of the more important considerations of the topic is A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's "On Joking Relationships," and "A Further Note on Joking Relationships," in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society, Essays and Addresses* (London: Cohen & West, 1952), pp. 90-116.

Angkola Batak

Boy:

Marsoban andarasi
Andor balian dipaisobanan;
Ma sude dongan marbagasi,
Tinggal au di sopo podoman.

Girl:

Ho ningmu tinggal di sopo podoman,
Au baya tinggal di bagas podoman;
Mare tasunggul barang parnipian,
Tai ulang hita marsipaoto-otoan.

Boy:

Taringot di barang parnipian,
Di ho situmbur ni dulang,
Sirege-rege ni amapang,
Jago ma hita ulang tabaen parsalisian,
Si boru ni tulang
Anso saut doma au babere ni amang.

Nada be labo mangkanji,
Dahanon dibagasan eme;
Mare ma hita marjanji,
Anso marsipamunan au laho kehe.

Muda au parjolo tu gasgas,
Tumbuk di toru ni podom2;
Muda au parjolo marbagas,
Mate ma au ditingki di na modom.

Girl:

Tarsunggul di na modom,
Harani pambaen ni nipi;
Mate ho ningmu di na modom,
Aropku ho ma parlekluh ni hotang bide.

Boy:

Nada au parlekluh ni hotang bide,
Hudukna manjadi adopna;
Baen denggan ni lidungmu do hubege,
Marsumpah ma au janjinta i da ulang
muba.

English

Gathering *andarasi* firewood,
String vines in the firewood spot;
Everyone else has gotten married,
I'm left alone in the young men's house.

You say you live in the young men's
house,
I myself stay in the girls' house;
Let's recall our things-to-dream-on,
But let us not fool each other.

["Things-to-dream-on," gifts exchanged
by courting couples to see if their mar-
riage will be auspicious. Each literally
sleeps on top of the gift, and if they
dream auspicious things about each
other, the marriage is thought to have
a good chance.]

Regarding our things-to-dream-on,
With you, branch of the wood *dulang*,
Bamboo bark now a rice *ampang*

[a ceremonial rice basket]

Let's watch out that we don't stir up
an argument,
Si boru of tulang,
So that I actually become *babere* of
amang. [sister's child of my father]

There are no honeybees about for starch,
The rice grains remained sealed in pods;
Come, let us make a promise,
So I properly take your leave in going.

If I go first to the dry field,
Nowhere but under the *podom2* tree;
If I am the first to marry,
May I die in my sleep.

Awaken from sleep,
Because of a dream;
You'll die you say while sleeping,
I think you are two-sided like the rattan
mat.

Not I the two-sided rattan mat,
The underside made into the top;
Because of the excellence of your words
I hear
I make an oath, our promise shall not be
altered.

Girl:

Muda huingot porpadamu,
Ditopi kobun partanyoman,
Muda hupikiri parbisukmu,
Nanggo layak partaonan.

Boy:

Beta 'le marjaring loba,
Tu Sialang Gonting Barumun;
Huambang hita madung mardomu roha,
Hape mangerjeng halalungun.

Girl:

Ho manopa sundur² bulu;
Mangkarkari asar ni sipagol;
Nada au na mangerjeng halalungun,
Ho ma na manyunggul sude ni na dangol.

Indon burangirnai,
Burangir na lambat nada buruk,
Na lelung nada malos,
Inanta nada tumbuk
Amanta nada mangaloas.

Marmata do na halimponan,
Marsimangot na dung mate;
Taringot di barang parnipian,
Paulad ma denggan tu au,
Ulang solot di ate².

Boy:

Marburangir hita jolo,
Bia dehe dai ni soda;
Markatai hita jolò,
Tarbia do ningmu pangalohona?

Bia dehe pandanta i
Pandan antunu do luani?
Bia dehe padanti i,
Padan na tulus do luani?

When I recall your field sickle,
At the edge of the weaver's-dye garden,
When I think over your cleverness,
It isn't proper to defend it.

Come on, let's catch honeybees,
On the way to Sialang Gonting Barumun;
Here I thought we had a meeting of
hearts,
But apparently you just had your eyes
on teasing me.
["on making me long for you"]

You hack down bamboo for a shelter,
And tear apart the bird's nest;
Not I who has her eye on teasing,
You're the one who's opened up all
manner of love sickness!

Here then our betel leaf,
Betel-not-rotten-for ages,
Not-dry-for-long-spells,
Our mother isn't agreeable [to this
marriage],
Our father doesn't give his permission.
[In this story-poem, the girl's *uda*--her
father's younger brother--does not
approve of the match.]

The eyed-ones are those who fall victim
to cinders,
Those who are dead are the ones to have
ghosts;
As for the things-to-dream on,
Just give them back nicely to me.
Don't always hide things away in your
heart.

Let's share betel first,
So we know the taste of soda;
Let's share words first,
What say you is the proper way?

So what's our marsh grass here,
Antunu marsh grass, do you think?
So what's our promise here,
A promise that's going to come through,
do you think?

Girl:

Poncoduhur ho mate ngohan,
Bayo panyisipi;
Disunggul ho na hinanan,
Anggo au nada pola muba marg ti.

You rascal, may you choke on your food,
You suspicious spy you!
You just think back to what went before.
As for me, I'm not the one to change or
alter.

Boy:

Ile, buruk batang buruk,
Didomdom udan sasadari;
Muruk pe ho da muruk,
Rohangki numma marpangulahi.

Ah, rotten wood keeps on rotting,
Pelted by raindrops every day;
Angry, even though you're angry,
My heart has already turned 'round to
goodness again.

Girl:

Silaklak ni landorung,
Sirege-rege ni amfang;
Sianak ni namboru,
Babere ni damang.

Bark of the wood *landorung*,
Bamboo bark now a rice *amfang*;
Sianak of *namboru*
Babere of [*d*]amang.

Ois hambeng ni Mandurana,
Na maranakkon andurian;
Tapadenggan ma songon mulana,
Tai muba ho dihapudian.

Oh, goats of the village Mandurana,
Who gave birth to porcupines;
We made things good like at the begin-
ning,
But you change things around here late
in the game.

The dialogue goes on like this for many verses more, but this excerpt should give the sense of the genre. These two individuals are confronting each other as father's sister's son and mother's brother's daughter, and that relationship takes precedent over and above any idiosyncratic personal characteristics or interests the two speakers may have. The form of their speech, like their social relationship as a whole, is ritualized: they must speak in set form 4-line pantuns. The content of their conversation must also deal in an emotional vocabulary of teasing and aggression. The conversation, and the social relationship portrayed there, are indelibly Batak. This courtship scene is inextricably bound to this one Sumatran society's particular kinship system of patrilineal clans and asymmetrical marriage alliance.

Other forms of Batak literature bring a new sort of male/female conversation and with it a new understanding of human society.

Tolbok Haleon: A Batak Novel

The second set of texts are also translated from Angkola Batak but are taken from a novel written in a style of social realism. The novel is Soetan Pangoerabaan's largely unknown *Tolbok Haleon* ("Season of Want"),¹¹ published privately in Sipirok in the 1930s. The novel concerns migration of some southern Batak to Deli, Sumatra's east coast plantation belt, and the action takes place in the first decade of

11. The *haleon* season is that time immediately before a new rice harvest when poorer village families must sometimes go without rice or mix what rice they have with corn or cassava--sure signs of abject poverty in the southern Batak homelands.

this century. *Tolbok Haleon* includes many dialogues between kinsmen and in fact between matrilineal cross cousins. Several of these are translated here for comparison to the martandang speech. In Soetan Pangoerabaan's novel, some of the conversations that flow between marriageable young men and women are significantly different from the types of verbal exchanges between the pair portrayed in ritual adat speech. Some of the speech in the *Tolbok Haleon* treats the speakers as individuals, with personalities distinct from their identity as marriageable cross cousins. Hence, the *Tolbok Haleon* conversations can provide important insights into the changing Batak social construction of the pareban relationship.

Fiction in the Angkola Batak language is an enigmatic blend of traditional and modern literary forms. In this novel of early twentieth century social transition in South Tapanuli and Deli, Soetan Pangoerabaan combines straight narrative in a mode of social realism with long stretches of adat poetry. This is a pattern followed in other novels of the 1930s about Sumatran ethnic homelands, such as M. Rusli's *Sitti Nurbaya* and Abdoel Moeis' *Salah Asuhan*, which also include pantun-style poetry in their prose narratives. Like these other novels in Indonesian this Batak work straddles traditional and modernizing ethnic homeland society in both its theme and linguistic style. *Tolbok Haleon* is also a transitional work in terms of its portrayal of the pareban relationship.

As in much Sumatran fiction of the 1930s, the theme of *Tolbok Haleon* is growing up. Its hero and heroine are south Tapanuli Batak in their teens when the novel begins; at its conclusion, they are married and living in Deli. The book charts this transition from homeland agricultural society to plantation life in polyglot Deli through its selection of speech forms as well as through its plot development. For instance, much of the early dialogue between the young hero and heroine is set out in ritualized martandang-like speech, with frequent recourse to verse forms. In their later relationship, once both have left southern Tapanuli for Deli, the pair speak frequently in conversational Batak. This transition in speech levels parallels the larger journey Batak kinship as a whole was beginning at the time--from a kinship world of preferential marriage rules and tightly structured village life to a social world where kinship occupied a more circumscribed sphere and where marriages were beginning to be contracted primarily on a basis of personal compatibility and affection. The shift in speech levels by the protagonists may well deliver a subliminal message to the book's Batak readership about the meaning of their kinship system, linking ritualistic speech forms, traditional village kinship, and images of *jaman dulu* (the past age) together on the one hand, and symbols of progress, modernity, prose form conversations, and a changing kinship order on the other. Translated examples of ritualized male-female conversations from early sections of the book and more conversational dialogues later on illustrate the change.

The story of the novel is approximately this: Djahoemarkar, a young assistant schoolmaster from Padangsidempuan in Angkola, falls in love with one of his students, a girl named Sitti Djaoerah. Things go along happily for a while as the two get to know each other, and as Djahoemarkar helps the girl with her studies. Trouble begins, though, with the appearance of that stock character of Sumatran literature, the Dirty Old Man. Like many of his fellows in this regional literature, *Tolbok Haleon's* Dirty Old Man is a rich merchant. He spies Sitti Djaoerah dressed up for a day at the fair and decides he must have her for his own. To facilitate the courtship, the rich merchant sends his wife back to her home village. Sitti Djaoerah will have nothing of the merchant since she loves Djahoemarkar, and her mother supports her in this choice. At this point, the old Soetan tries a subtler approach: he hires a bogus Islamic expert to give Koranic lessons to the girl's father and convince him that nubile teenagers should be married off to responsible men--i.e., rich merchants--before "something happens" in the sexual line. This last so-called

Koranic lesson is a direct jibe at Sitti Djaoerah's friendship with the young school-master.¹² The girl's father is eventually won over by the merchant's blandishments and the Islamic teacher's horrific predictions of feminine downfall: he promises his daughter to the old man. Sitti Djaoerah and her mother, warned that emissaries of the merchant are coming the next morning to discuss bride-price payments, run away from home. They flee Angkola in a horse-drawn mailcart and find refuge in a kinsman's home in the Mandailing town of Panyabungan. Djahoemarkar has by this time been forced by economic circumstances to seek his fortune in the rantau. He has left Tapanuli for Deli, traveling there on foot through the Toba Batak homeland. Once in Medan he sends word to Sitti Djaoerah and her mother to join him there. This they are eventually able to do, also making the journey on foot. After another series of adventures at finding and keeping jobs in the Medan area, the couple and Sitti Djaoerah's mother finally settle down to a relatively prosperous and peaceful rantau life.

The hero and heroine are classificatory matrilineal cross cousins, with the young man being a Harahap clansman and the young woman a boru Regar. This circumstance is not stressed at all in the novel, however. In fact, the reader has to search the work to find out the protagonists' clan identities and affinal relationships.

The book is a rich source of reconstructed conversations on kinship themes, and I have selected three representative dialogues for analysis. The first two come early in the book and early in Djahoemarkar and Sitti Djaoerah's relationship. The first conversation is patently ritualistic and the second strongly resembles standard martandang talk, although it is presented in prose sentences. It provides an example of a transitional sort of speech, part way between fully ritualized pareban communication and conversational male-female speech. The third conversation, from late in the novel, is conceptually and formally distinct from these more ritualistic encounters.

A Surat Katang-Katang Reading

In this first conversation, the pair are walking home from school one day when Djahoemarkar boasts that he can, literally, pluck poems from the trees. An old form of village speech involves reading social and cosmological meaning from various grasses, and leaves and branches of the forest. Much of the speech of adat ceremonies entails "readings" of this sort. Here, Djahoemarkar makes up some verses for Sitti Djaoerah's amusement as she holds up a succession of items.

"So, there is another name for bamboo, for this bamboo?" [says Sitti Djaoerah, thirteen years old at the time this conversation takes place. She is talking to Djahoemarkar, sixteen.]

"There's no other name, but the end parts of the phrase are different: there is Big Bamboo, Sorik Bamboo, Chinese Bamboo, Poring Bamboo, Sorik Bamboo, Lomang Bamboo for making sticky rice sweets, Thorny-Bamboo-of-our-Ancestors-used-for-writing-their-cries-and-laments. The bamboo in front of us there is named Big Bamboo, and it is the beginning of a little song that says,

12. Part of the chapter of *Tolbok Haleon* including the Soetan's infatuation with Sitti Djaoerah and the so-called Islamic lessons that ensue is translated in my *Adat, Islam, and Christianity in a Batak Homeland* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Papers in International Studies, forthcoming).

Madungdung bulu godang Mangalaungi na mandurung; Simbur hamu magodang, Anso adong ubat ni lungun.	The Big Bamboo bends earthward, Sheltering the fish-netters; May you grow quickly to adulthood, So there's medicine for my lovesickness."
--	--

"Hehe . . . so plants can be made into songs, can they?" said Sitti Djaoerah happily, for this was the first time she had heard talk like this from Djahoemarkar.

"Why not . . . !"

"Well then, what is that tree over there with the red buds?"

"That's what's called *simartulan*," said Djahoemarkar.

"It would be nice if song lyrics could be made from that," said Sitti Djaoerah.

"All right:

Ummolat simartulan, Sian dangka ni simartolu; Ummolat paruntungan, Sian dongan na dua tolu.	Greater the <i>simartulan</i> tree, From the branch of the <i>simartolu</i> ; Greater my unhappy fate, From that of all other people."
--	---

"Oh indeed . . . that fern over there, that would make a good song lyric."

"All right:

Sangjongkal dope pahu, Madung ditinggang pangaritan; Sangjongkal dope au, Madung ditinggang parkancitan.	The fern is just a handspan high, A lathe for bamboo has fallen on it; I am just a handspan high, Pain and suffering have fallen on me."
---	---

"That orange tree over there, how is that made into a song?"

"Madabu unte tonggi, Na mata painte malamun; Madabu holso ditondi, Iba markancit mangan minum.	A sweet orange falls off the tree, Unripe still, unready to eat; An oath falls into the soul, I hurt just to eat and drink."
---	---

"The stalks of those rushes over there, how might they be made into a song?"

"Ditampul bona ni tolong, Marumbak tu bona ni pisang; Sapola pola na manolong, Ulang dilanglang pangusayang.	Chop down the <i>tolong</i> rushes, They fall back onto the banana tree; If you lend help, Don't let your love go for nothing."
---	--

"Can a garden be made into a song?"

"Muda kobun parpisangan, Buntu buntu parkacangan; Muda kobul pangidoan, Ho . . . do . . . donganku sapanganon.	If it's a banana orchard, It's on the hills around the bean farm; If my request be fulfilled, You . . . then . . . be my partner-of-a-dinnerplate." ["of-the-same-food"]
--	--

"Can a jacket be made into a song?"

"Gari tarbaen songon batu,
Manangkok tu adian batang;
Gari targaen songon baju,
Ulang sirang sian pematang.

If only the path was made of stones,
We could go up to the clearing;
If only you were like my jacket,
You wouldn't be separated from my body."

"Ye-es in-deed! What about a banana peel?"

"Gari prodangku taparporda,
Sarisir lambak ni pisang;
Gari rohangku taparroha,
Satapak so jadi sirang.

If only my scythe we'd use as a scythe,
The lining of the banana skin;
If only my heart got its wish,
So much as a footprint's distance we
would not be separated."

"And what then might be the song out of a scarf?"

"Basaen ragi dua,
Undung2 tu sikola;
Muda rap2 hita na dua,
Lupa au di na suada.

A two-colored scarf,
Protecting you from sunbeams on the
way to school;
If the two of us would only be together,
I would totally forget my poverty."

"I'll bet *sanggar* grass cannot be made into a song, can it?"

"Why not? That's the best one of all."

"How does it go?"

"Sanggar na mait-ait,
I ma na padungdungdung-
dungkon;
Muda dung padais dais,
I ma na palungunlungunkon.

Field grasses that blow,
That's what bends down on itself double;
If you barely touch me,
That's what makes me long for you."

(*Tolbok Haleon*, pp. 203-5.)

This dialogue is a written form of a variant of *martandang* speech called *surat katang-katang*, or "leaf letters." At the turn of the century, few Batak adolescents could read the "surat Oelando" (Dutch letters, or Latin script). With the Arabic script confined to religious life and the old Batak script limited to *adat* adepts, this left village teenagers without a ready medium for writing love letters. Sometimes they resorted to an older Batak practice of communicating through proverbs linked metaphorically to different plants and objects, as *Djahoemarkar* does in this conversation. Young people could compose complex love letters by wrapping a variety of leaves and twigs together in little boxes and sending them by child messenger to their sweethearts. The addressee would break open the bundle and pull out the leaves one by one, calling out the associated messages to her friends as she went.

In this conversation in *Tolbok Haleon*, the author has *Djahoemarkar* give a tour de force *surat katang-katang* performance that follows standard *martandang* dictates exactly. The speaker aims to overawe his audience through his verbal facility and cleverness, and all of his readings are in *pantun* form. The relationship between the speakers is essentially that of stereotypic *martandang* partners.

A Marriage Proposal

Other conversations in the novel are tied to ritual speech in less obvious ways. In fact, the unsuspecting non-Batak reader might not notice any formulaic qualities in such *Tolbok Haleon* dialogues as the following, which involves a marriage proposal. The conversation comes early in the book, when *Sitti Djaoerah* is being besieged by the rich merchant and has been forbidden by her father to see

Djahoemarkar. The young people arrange a secret meeting by a river in Padang-sidempuan, and Djahoemarkar talks to Sitti Djaoerah with an indirectness and subtlety like that found in martandang speech between pareban. Note, however, that the following conversation is related by the author in prose form.

. . . Not long after, he [Djahoemarkar] got to the big coconut palm they had agreed on as a meeting place; Sitti Djaoerah herself it seemed was already waiting there. When Djahoemarkar was still far away she already saw him, but because he was dressed in such ragged clothes, she did not believe right away that he actually was Djahoemarkar-the-Opener-of-Longings,¹³ and because of that she did not call out to him, because she was afraid that the man might be someone else. Because there were lots of fish yanking on Djahoemarkar's fishline, it was as if he had forgotten their promise to meet. At the point her heart jumped at seeing the man fishing, that was the point too that her heart flared up in anger, because Djahoemarkar seemed happier fishing than looking for her.

Actually, it was not like that at all. Djahoemarkar's eyes were always roving back to the big coconut palm, looking for Sitti Djaoerah, but because she was hidden between the folds of the big coconut trunk he did not immediately see the girl. It was only after he had worked his way up to Sitti Djaoerah's place that the girl was visible. Once he had just so much as seen Sitti Djaoerah, straightaway he jumped up onto the riverbank and caught hold of her hand. What happened then was nothing other than voices weeping from longing. There was no knowing the happiness of their hearts at that time. "Now then," said Djahoemarkar, "you go stand near this coconut palm so I can go into the water and fish; I'll talk to you from the water so no one will know."

Djahoemarkar jumped into the water again and cast his line into the eddying pool near the riverbank, and even when there were fish that took hold of his line he didn't pull them in.

He played out the fishline with his left hand, his face turned toward Sitti Djaoerah on land, and they talked unbothered. Finally Djahoemarkar said: "I already know clearly that people look on us disapprovingly and spitefully, and because of that we cannot talk together whenever we would; if we were to keep going on as we used to people would get after me. So now, just as long as we hold each other dear from this world on to final days, eventually we will be able to meet each other all the time. What I ask of you Djaoerah is this: If your heart is in earnest in holding the heart of this body dear to you, let us make a firm oath-promise that may not be altered."

"What oath would that be, friend? As for holding you dear, I needn't always be telling you, it's enough just to say: if there be love in your heart regarding me, ten times that is my love regarding you, so no matter what sort of promise you say, of course I will go along with it," said Sitti Djaoerah, wiping away her tears.

"Well then, I ask of you a promise: if I do not get married, you must not get married, and I myself, if you do not get married, I shall not take a wife.

13. "Djahoemarkar na humarkar halalungun": *harkar* means to open something up. The young man's name is a form of this. *Halalungun* is an elegant way of saying longing or lovesickness (*lungun ni roha*). The entire phrase is a gentle nickname and has something of the flavor of the fancy address terms used for young people in the turi2an chants.

When people come asking for you as a bride, that is when I tell my family to go asking for a bride for me. On the night you arrive in someone's house to be married, that is the night when a bride must arrive in my house for me. When you are seated to be married in front of the council of village elders, that will be the time I receive advice-to-the-newlyweds speeches making me a married man. The reason I do this is so there will be no hurt feelings between us. If it is fated that you marry someone else, and no bride arrives at my house for me, just what do you think my heartsickness will be at your leaving me behind? And you too, if it's fated that someone else wants this body here, how will the enormity of your heart's pain be measured? Because of that I ask that we both be married in the same hour. If your heart is happy saying yes to the-one-who-has-you-as-rice-spooner, and my heart is happy saying yes to my rice-spooner [wife], there will be no cause for spite and envy. Well then, what are your thoughts on this?" said Djahoemarkar.

"But it's awfully hard to understand the drift of your words, friend. How will you know, if someone has come to ask for me, so that you can go off asking for a bride yourself? How will you know that I have already arrived in someone's house as their bride, so that a bride can come for you? And how am I supposed to tell you that I've already been married, so that you yourself can sit there and receive your advice-to-the-newlyweds speeches? Because of that, I don't know what my answer is to what you say. So, so that we do not play-peekaboo-behind-our-index-fingers, or hunker-down-behind-our-middle-fingers-like-people-hiding-in-the-folds-of-the-trunk-of-the-big-banyan-tree, say straight out what is in your heart. Before you say anything, first I promise that whatever you say I will go along with it, so there'll be no way we inflict pain on each other's hearts," said Sitti Djaoerah.

"Well, if it's like that then, I ask you, you must be my companion-to-old-age, and as I live you live, as I am happy you are happy, in short, we two must be of-an-endeavor,of-a-body from this world on to final days; and if it is not to be like that, say so beforehand so I can go hang myself in front of you on a branch of this tree."

"Alhamdulillah.....that's just what I have been asking for day and night to Almighty God, and now that you've said it,I breathe easier! Now I get all that you were saying, because this way, it's all possible: if I go off to someone's house as a bride, and you yourself have a bride come to you, it'll have to be me coming and you getting a bride--what have I left out from all you were saying before?"

"Well, if it's like that, let's shake hands on it to firm up our promise, but just you remember, we make this promise not before anyone important in an earthly sense, but before God, and it may not be altered--if we cannot be together in this world, then we will be together in the hereafter."

"Yes," said Sitti Djaoerah, and she grasped and shook the hand of Djahoemarkar to firm up the promise.

(*Tolbok Haleon*, pp. 241-44.)

(Southern Batak are great handshakers; that part of the conversation is entirely in character for the novel's protagonists and for Angkola culture in general.)

This conversation deals in two conceptual worlds in both its linguistic style and in its meaning. The girl and the boy speak in narrative sentences, not martandang verses, and in that sense have already moved away from ritualistic pareban speech. However, the coyness and indirectness of standard pareban speech are retained in Djahoemarkar's circuitous proposal of marriage. There are several other ritual

aspects to the conversation. The alternation of speaking parts, with one speaker ending his statement with a question and the other taking it up, resembles ritual pareban speech. The facetious, overdramatic quality of some of the boy's statements also recalls the exaggerated threats of martandang types of pareban speech. Note, for instance, Djahoemarkar's assertion that he will "go hang myself in front of you on a branch of this tree," reminiscent of the common martandang demand that the partner profess love to the speaker or the latter will die. Both speakers also use adat proverbs to help make their point, a rhetorical device that gives the dialogue some flavor of adat speech. Sitti Djaoerah, for instance, asks Djahoemarkar not to "markolip-kolip disitumudu, marondingonding disitualang," not to "play-peekaboo-behind-our-index-fingers-or-hunker-down-behind-our-middle-fingers-like-people-hiding-in-the-folds-of-the-trunk-of-the-big-banyan-tree." Answering her, the boy asks her to marry him by citing some common wedding proverbs taken from the adat oratory of marriages and bride-price negotiating sessions: he says that the two of them must be "of-an-endeavor, of-a-body" from this world into the next. Djahoemarkar's earlier reference to a wife as a man's "rice-spooner" is also a foray into adat speech.

Other aspects of the conversation, however, move beyond the forms and assumptions of ritual pareban speech. The two speakers have been identified earlier in the book as pareban, but that kin relationship is not invoked here through either kin term address forms or pareban identification riddles. Sitti Djaoerah refers to Djahoemarkar as "friend" (*ale*). He in turn uses her first name plus the familiar second person pronoun (*ho Djaoerah*). In the rest of the conversation they simply do not name each other, omitting address forms entirely. This may be a common practice in kinship systems in transition, where address usage is ambiguous and a speaker may have a confusing range of address forms from which to choose.

Later conversations between the pair take them even further from the strict pareban relationship and its characteristic stylized speech forms.

A Household Conversation in Medan

Other conversations between Djahoemarkar and Djaoerah later in the book, once the pair are married and living in Medan, are in conversational Batak free of any obvious ritual conventions. The following is a translated conversation they have about a pleasure trip. By this time they have several children and are enjoying a prosperous city existence.

"Well, if that's how it will be, then let's go, Djaoerah--I'm interested now that they've said that," said Ompoe ni Marah Moedo [Sitti Djaoerah's mother, grandmother of her child Marah Moedo].

"All right, once your *babere*¹⁴ comes home from the office we'll cook dinner so we won't be late," said Sitti Djaoerah.

"Let me go, *inang* [mother], let me go, *ompoeng* [grandparent]," said Djahoemarkar's children merrily.

"Yes, our father has already arranged for a car--go bathe so you look nice."

Once it was 4 o'clock Djahoemarkar left the office and went straight home, and he found the car he had ordered from Medan waiting there in front of

14. The *babere* or husband's sister's son should ideally be the one to marry the speaker's daughter. Sitti Djaoerah is referring to her husband Djahoemarkar here.

the house. "Well, so you've come, Bang Roeslan," he said, meaning the chauffeur of the car.

"Oh yes, I came early because I was afraid of being late," said Bang Roeslan.

"Well, everybody go up into the house so we can eat. Oh, Inang ni Si Marah Moedo [Sitti Djaoerah, Marah Moedo's mother], get the food ready so we can eat--Bang Roeslan I'll wager is already hungry."

"Everything's ready now, come on up everybody so we can get away."

Djahoemarkar and Bang Roeslan went in and ate but they weren't really very hungry because it seemed they could not get away fast enough to go look at the airplane, and the children too didn't come back for seconds of rice.

"Go put on some good clothes--let's not have people say we're jungle rustics," said Djahoemarkar.

"Everything's ready--if we're going, let's go. Ompui is already dressed," said Sitti Djaoerah.

"Go start our car, Bang Roeslan, so we can go," said Djahoemarkar, and after that they all got in and went off in the direction of the airfield in Kampung Djati Oeloe. On arrival at the airfield, they found people spread all over the field and even outside the fence.

"You all just stay right here while I go buy the tickets," said Djahoemarkar, pushing into the crowd. Sweat broke out on Djahoemarkar as he fought his way to the ticket-seller's box. Once tickets were purchased, he went and got the rest of them and went into the fenced-in field.

"Now don't be awestruck at all this--let's not have people laugh at us. There's the airplane--in a moment it will fly up to the clouds."

"Yes.....but what is going to make it fly up, with the plane being so big?" said Sitti Djaoerah.

"Don't worry, he'll make the plane fly--you all just watch and see what happens," said Djahoemarkar.

Not long afterward the plane's propellers began to spin like a little bamboo windmill, and then it began to bump along the field until finally it flew up into the clouds circling the city of Medan. And after about five minutes it came back down safely, and the crowd shouted out "Horas...Horas..." So, then, are you not awed by the greatness of God?

(*Tolbok Haleon*, pp. 418-20.)

This is similar to many conversations in the last chapters of the novel; when in Deli, the speakers converse in relaxed, relatively nonritualized speech. In these conversations the personalities of Djahoemarkar and Sitti Djaoerah are drawn with the greatest sharpness, as they are distinguished fully from their early personae as a homeland pareban pair. Yet it should be noted that the pair still use kin terms of address.

Although in some of the latter sections of *Tolbok Haleon* the novelist still uses proverbs, stylized eulogies, and occasional 4-line pantuns, there is a definable shift toward conversational dialogue stressing the content of the exchange over the ritual form and the personalities of the speakers over their kin relationship to each other.

Azab dan Sengsara: An Indonesian Novel

The final set of texts is taken from a modern Indonesian language novel, Merari Siregar's *Azab dan Sengsara* ("Torment and Misery"). This novel takes the transition much further and, indeed, represents a reformulation of Batak kinship. Fully as overblown as its title, the book includes numerous fictional dialogues between marriageable men and women who are, again, pareban. The fictional portrayal of this relationship through speech is also different in this novel: in the *Azab dan Sengsara* dialogues many of the ritual features of the joking relationships recede into the background and the speakers' identities as "husband" and "wife" and even "man" and "woman" come to the fore. Interestingly, the author also makes frequent asides to the reader on "what is wrong with Batak kinship." Arranged marriages between young people who do not love each other particularly trouble him.

Like Soetan Pangoerabaan's novel of the 1930s, Merari Siregar's *Azab dan Sengsara* of the 1950s combines unmistakably Batak family situations and speech forms with incidents and dialogue that could take place in many geographical and social locales in Indonesia. *Torment and Misery* is another account of southern Batak young people who leave the homeland to migrate to Sumatra's east coast. The events depicted in Siregar's novel took place at about the same time as the *Tolbok Haleon* story. Despite these similarities, however, Merari Siregar evokes a social world that is much farther removed from traditional homeland Batak culture than anything portrayed in the earlier novel. Merari Siregar, for instance, sometimes gives his characters conversations with little Batak flavor whatsoever. By these means and by his frequent editorial asides on the failings of Batak kinship, Siregar constructs new images of social relationships, marriage, and men and women.

Azab dan Sengsara is a thinly fictionalized account of a family tragedy that occurred in the Sipirok area, and many Sipirok Batak today know the actual clan identities and village origins of the characters in the novel. (In 1976, the book was on sale in a book store near the market; some townspeople had read it and many knew of its existence.) The story of the novel is fairly simple and has many of the same stock characters who people *Tolbok Haleon*. There is an attractive young couple who are exact matrilineal cross cousins. The boy, Aminuddin, is the son of the village headman or raja of a small village outside Sipirok. The girl, Mariamin, is the daughter of one of the descendants of a well-placed Sipirok raja. Aminuddin's mother is the sister of Mariamin's father. All the characters are Muslim. As the story opens, the girl is a teenager, living in a hut with her saintly mother and cherubic little brother. The mother is consumptive and the little brother never gets enough to eat. The family has been brought to this pass by the profligacies of the father: born to considerable wealth, he has squandered the family fortunes and reputation through gambling and compulsive court litigation over the inheritance of land. Aminuddin and Mariamin have grown up in the ideal pareban mold, considering each other childhood friends and then sweethearts as they reach adolescence. Aminuddin's parents, however, consider Mariamin an unsuitable match for their son because of her alarming poverty. They select a distant classificatory matrilineal cross cousin to be their son's bride, and proceed apace with the bride-price negotiations. Aminuddin leaves Tapanuli to search for salaried work in Deli, expecting to send for Mariamin eventually to be his bride. However, the parents shortcircuit these plans by sending him the substitute bride instead. Unable to go directly counter to adat and disobey his parents, Aminuddin goes through with the forced marriage. Mariamin, nearly beside herself with grief, stays at home for a time and then finally accepts the marriage proposal of a despicable ---- dirty old man. This one has syphilis, a circumstance which leads to Mariamin's refusal to consummate the marriage. The unhappy couple live in Medan until Mariamin finally

can stand it no longer and flees the rantau for her original home in Tapanuli. She dies there shortly afterwards, and is buried in an isolated grave (a particularly bitter fate for the funeral monument-conscious Batak).

The author assures us that this indubitable surplus of torment and misery is brought about by a single, central failing of Batak society: a tendency to force young people into loveless marriages. People *must* be allowed to marry for love, Siregar writes, but the Batak kinship system encourages arranged marriages for family alliance reasons. Mariamin's marriage to Aminuddin would have been a love match, and so amicable and true to the pair's basic humanity. Their actual marriages to other people were arranged without their emotional consent, and so were dehumanizing and ultimately tragic (all this according to Merari Siregar's interpretations).

At one level, the author clearly is directly challenging traditional Batak kinship. He argues for true love and personal compatibility as the only defensible basis for marriage. In this he has many followers in rantau society today. Paradoxically, though, the "love match" of Mariamin and Aminuddin which he holds up as the ideal is actually an exact pareban marriage, the mother's-brother's-daughter union most encouraged in the adat. Thus even in his self-consciously "modern" stance toward Batak kinship, Merari Siregar and his novel remain transitional in character, with some uninterrupted ties to an older kinship world.

Merari Siregar's complex understanding of Batak kinship can be seen in the various dialogues of the novel. There are two main series of male/female conversations in *Azab dan Sengsara*. First are the series of talks between Mariamin and Aminuddin themselves, and second are the conversations between Aminuddin's parents, who are another exact matrilineal cross cousin pair, although their speech has qualities removing it entirely from the realm of speech between Batak kinsmen to a place of speech between men and women per se. Here is one of the parents' conversations:

For twenty years he had held the position left to him by his father and paternal grandfather. And for that same amount of time he had lived with his wife, living with good fortune like other people. Like other people? O, no, for not everyone had received such good fortune. But then, why would they not be happy? Their marriage was bound together with a love both clean and firm and in addition there was another tie--that is, they were relatives. The man had loved his wife from the time she was a girl 'til they were married and 'til now. And how could he not love this wife of his, for the woman had a very good character and mode of behavior that was in accord with that of her husband. Her simple face and her soft behavior were strong enough to hold the heart of her husband, to draw the thoughts of the man to his wife. She was quite adept at entertaining her husband, when he was mournful and sad; and in all difficulties she helped her husband with ideas and talk, for she knew a woman should try to make her husband happy. She would laugh when her husband was angry so that his furrowed brow would become smooth. Because of the simple smile of the sweet woman and her soft flowing words, the heart of the angry man would become cool and calm. When a woman has this sort of character and behavior, she can govern her husband: it can be said that her husband is underneath her little finger.

Two years they were together and then the wife gave birth to the fruit of their marriage, a boy--Aminu'ddin. The bond between husband and wife became stronger yet, 'til one loved the other as he loved himself. When Mother would nurse her heart's favorite on the bed, Father would not be able to hold back his love. He would embrace his wife while saying, "Ah, I

feel so lucky, for our child is like a sun that shines on our marriage with a happy light. Isn't that so, *anggi*?"

"Men's feelings are like that, because of the birth of their child. So much the more so the happiness of the mother, who has suffered all manner of sufferings when giving birth to the child, who becomes the favorite of her heart and the beloved one of her thoughts," responded the wife with a sweet smile, looking at her husband with a steady gaze. The gleaming light of the mother's eyes perforated the man's heart; eyes' light coursed out and entered his heart, entered his heart, to the point that the fire of desire and love for his wife flamed up. He came closer and embraced his wife, this time more strongly, his hand trembling a bit.

"Watch out, our child! Can't you be patient? Wait a moment for him to fall asleep. Let me set him down first," responded the mother, putting her heart's favorite down to sleep.

"Your prettiness is extraordinary! I am very fortunate that God introduced you to me," said her husband, standing up, leaving the bed of his wife, with a shining face which showed his happiness.

(*Azab dan Sengsara*, pp. 24-27.)

The passage is remarkable for its forthright sexual allusions, something not often set out in so many words in Batak-authored literature written before the 1970s. The excerpt is noteworthy in several other respects. At one point in the dialogue Baginda Diatas does call his wife by the kin term "*anggi*" used by men toward their *pareban*, but except for that one note there no clue that this dialogue is between Batak, much less between Batak matrilineal cross cousins. The pair are speaking here as "husband" and "wife," and in fact even as "man" and "woman." Their primary social identity is not Batak or even Indonesian, but Muslim: the man and woman participate in a marriage arranged by Allah. Batak adat recedes into the background, to be replaced in conversations like these by a sort of natural law decreed by the Muslim God.

The author makes much the same point two chapters later in an aside on love as the proper basis for marriage, in which he explicitly links love matches to Allah's will for his human followers. This greater commandment to be true to one's own humanity and thus to Allah's plan for his human followers contravenes any more limited ethnic adat rules. The passage goes as follows:

Thoughts of that sort [arranging swift marriages for their children] are often found among villagers, who, however, do not think much of such marriages later on. They see marriage as one of those customary things. That is, if their daughter reaches adulthood she has to be paired up. The same thing for their sons. He has to be quickly married off, because it will seem very peculiar in the eyes of the general populace if parents are too late in marrying off their son.

Marriage is indeed an adat practice and a custom that each and every person must undertake, when one reaches the proper time. God who created everything that exists is the one who arranged matters in this way for us who inhabit the earth, for He created a man and a woman--Adam and Eve--and He ordered these two people to live together, to help each other out, to love each other as they love themselves. And so in the adat that was so arranged--that is what we follow. But in the best case, we should really think longer about such matters. Will this individual marriage bring happiness and good luck to the man and the woman from each side? And the bond tying the marriage

together must be truly strong, so that divorce or Muslim-style divorce by the husband does not happen every time you turn around. This is something that ruins the perfection of the union and the happiness of people who are man and wife. Try to imagine how sad the heart would be to see a man who has divorced his pregnant wife, his wife who has been given a little gift by God-- for after all God blesses the marriages he arranges among his humble servants. And later when the child in the womb is born into the world, ah! how bitter the mother's feelings must be to look at it. "Ah, my child, my beloved," she says, looking at the child on her lap, her tears streaming down, "your Mamma is so unlucky and so is my child, to be born into the world without hearing the sound of your father's voice, for he has thrown away Mother and you. If your father loved you, even though he hated your mother, surely he would not have tossed me aside, for you were still in my womb. But now your father has no use for the two of us. But what is there to do? This is our predestined fate."

They are not few in number, women who suffer this sort of fate. Sometimes they do not hesitate to end their lives, just so long as they can separate themselves from their child, for they cannot look at their child going along half dead, half alive because proper care cannot be had. Yes, well, what's to be done, for Mother's body is still thin and her face pale because she just gave birth to the child--where is there any energy to find food for the child and care for its needs? It is better to kill herself than to see the condition of such a child, for only death can free her from this disastrous fate.

This then is the result of a marriage that is not tied together by the bond of love.

(*Azab dan Sengsara*, pp. 65-66.)

Merari Siregar then assures his readers that loveless arranged marriages lead to divorces which lead to a floating population of distraught divorcées, who move to the large cities and become prostitutes. This leads in turn to the general downfall of urban Indonesian society.

Be that as it may, passages of this sort attack the alliance basis of Batak marriages and propose unions based on personal compatibility as the only defensible sort of marriage in Batak or any other human society.

There is one additional type of discourse used in *Azab dan Sengsara* that makes this novel an innovative sort of Batak discussion of kinship. A typical example, which again contains a dialogue between Baginda Diatas and his wife, goes as follows:

When the sun was almost below the horizon, Aminu'ddin's father was sitting on the verandah of his house with his wife. His wife asked, "Who is it that we can get as our daughter-in-law? Let's not keep putting this off."

"My heart is doubtful and hesitant, for at this time there's a lack to choose from. That is what I keep thinking over now," responded Baginda Diatas; that was the title people used for this village headman.

"A lack to choose from?" asked his wife. "With Sipirok as big as it is, with how many hundred girls in this area, and just one person we're looking for?"

"I know all that. But the one chosen can't be just anybody."

The married pair were quiet for a moment, then Baginda Diatas said: "There is only one person I will agree to, her appearance is suitable, her class standing is sufficient, though I don't really know about her behavior yet."

"What is her marga? Who are her parents?" asked his wife.

"Her marga is Siregar, and her father is a village headman. I think it well that she become our daughter-in-law. Best that we go over there. In my estimation we can perhaps get that child--and as for the bride-price, there'll be no retreating on our first offer!" answered her husband.

To explain the adat istiadat of the Batak and particularly their marriage adat, it is best to explain about the rules that people must follow in marriage.

Each Batak has a *suku* (a marga). A newborn child has the marga of his father. There are all sorts of marga. For instance in the Sipirok region the Siregar and the Harahap are the most numerous. There are also other marga, for instance: Pane, Pohan, Sibuan, and others. Just how all these marga came to be will not be gone into here. These people, all of them, have just two or three common ancestors, the ones who started descent lines--but nowadays there are many, many marga. So it is certain that the Siregar marga once were brothers with the Harahap marga, the Pohan, or the others. Where the split came, Allah only knows. Such matters are related in old genealogy myths. One person says it's this way, another says it's that way, until there is no knowing which way is the right one anymore. Then too such stories fall like fairy tales on the ear.

So whoever is going to get married is not allowed to take someone from his own marga. For example, a man of the Siregar marga may not take a girl from the Siregar marga, even if they are far apart in the marga; that is, it is only their distant ancestors who lived hundreds of years ago who were brothers. They cannot take each other in marriage because that is strongly forbidden in the adat. But a young man of the Siregar marga may marry a woman of the Harahap marga, even though his family connection with the girl is still close--say, he may share grandparents with her. That is, the man's grandparents on his mother's side are the grandparents of the girl on her father's side.

It's only the marga that differ, but actually the two of them are of-a-single-blood, but because of the influence of adat this second sort of marriage has been made customary and the first sort is forbidden with great strictness.

This prohibition is a surprising thing. What is wrong with some certain person marrying another person, if their family connection is already far apart, and in fact sometimes just doesn't exist anymore, because the two of them do not know when their distant ancestors may have been brothers or of-a-single-blood. Must their marriage be prohibited, because they are both Harahap or both Pane or whatever? For they are in love with each other, the one wanting the other. Because of this it is not right that there be such a prohibition. It is true that they are in the same marga, but the descent lines are far apart nowadays and they are not of-a-single-blood anymore.

In such lands as, say, Deli, Palembang, and Java such rules are not found--only in Tapanuli.

Yes, the proverb says: Different pools, different fish; different fields, different grasshoppers.

That is true, each and every area has an adat that is different from that of other areas. And therefore inhabitants of that area should be loyal to their adat that was set out by their ancestors.

But considering the revolution of eras, all of the rules simply cannot be held on to, *for those which are less than good should be changed and those which are not proper should be wiped off the slate.*

One example is the prohibition against marrying within a clan. This can no longer be defended and held on to. Because of this, a person should be freed to marry another person, even though they are of the same clan--that is, even though their relationship is still tight and close according to adat.

(*Azab dan Sengsara*, pp. 144-47; original italics.)

Merari Siregar goes on to argue against the payment of *boli* or a bride-price to the wife's family. For this, and for his direct attack on adat's rule of clan exogamy, Merari Siregar would find little popular support even today. Both practices are seen as pellucidly good parts of adat and peaceable village order. However, the very endeavor of discussing Batak kinship as a system is an acceptable and, as has been mentioned, a popular form of discourse in South Tapanuli today.

Several general cultural assumptions about kinship are evident from these *Azab dan Sengsara* passages. Men and women encounter each other in courtship relationships and in marriage largely as men and women, not as cross cousins. More than that, each adat world on earth is governed by certain rules, and, "considering the revolution of eras, all the rules simply cannot be held on to," a caveat with serious consequences for the social position of kinship rules. "Those rules which are less than good should be changed," Siregar asserts, "and those which are not proper should be wiped off the slate."

When this passage is contrasted to the sort of kinship system portrayed in the ritual kinship speech cited earlier in the article, three important symbolic shifts can be noted. First, Batak adat, and with it its distinctive kinship system, has been recast as one of a plurality of adat systems which Allah in his wisdom has established in the different human societies around the world. Second, the particular rules of any one adat system are now defined as social rules that pertain to commerce between human beings. The discussion of marriage accordingly becomes primarily a discussion of events in the social sphere. Finally, adat rules on kinship, as social entities, should be open to human amendment, if social conditions warrant.

Conclusions

All the types of literature examined here are best seen as Batak ethno-ethnography, Batak-authored descriptions of and apologia for Batak society. Before the Dutch introduced the Latin script and the printing of documents, the Batak ethno-ethnography of their kinship system was an oral one, made up of their profuse genre of adat speech on descent and alliance themes. There was a Batak script, but it was known primarily to a few adat adepts; from all reports today at least, the Arabic script, introduced into the southern Batak homelands with Islam in the 1820s, was used mostly for religious matters. In the present literate age, a shift in the Angkola legitimacy apparatus has occurred, so that there is now an increasing reliance on the printed word when Batak talk among themselves about their kinship system. Much oral adat speech still survives, but it jockeyes for position with written Angkola, and, especially, written and spoken Indonesian. The written Angkola Batak language itself, used throughout the 1930s as a written medium for stories and novels, is today largely a language of family correspondence, ceremonial invitations, adat handbooks, and school primers for the first three grades of school.

The transition seen here in Angkola adat speech and literature is one small part of a much broader process of modernization occurring throughout Batak culture. The term modernization is apt here, because the Batak societies are making the transition from fully agricultural, village-centered ethnic homelands to administrative regions of a national state.¹⁵ Today, many homeland Batak hold civil ser-

15. The view of modernization set out by sociologists Peter Berger, Brigitte Ber-

vice jobs, jobs with bus or truck firms, or jobs in the various offices of Islam or the HKBP, the local Batak Protestant church. A school-centered homeland, Angkola routinely graduates the majority of town and even village children from at least six years of public school. The culture as a whole is moving away from the strict village and agricultural focus evident in the traditional adat towards an openness to new economic and political relationships not based strictly on kinship. At the level of adat, this transition entails a loss of many village rituals, the reduction and reinterpretation of others,¹⁶ and a realization that the Batak adat sphere must exist in conjunction with the institutional and ideational realities of the Indonesian national state (*negara*) and the world religions (*agama*). In the field of literature, Angkola's modernization has involved a number of related transitions. These are too numerous and complex to be treated with any adequacy here, but two of the more salient ones can be noted.

In the last eighty years or so (dating the transformation is difficult, as one is working with anecdotal folk accounts), the role of the verbal artist has been differentiated for the first time from the traditional role of the Angkola verbal adept. This transition from ritualist (verbal dueler, turizhan chanter, ritual political orator) to artistic performer (writer, poet) is by no means complete today. Angkola still has a number of adat orators who conceptualize their role as an essentially sacred one and who see their oratorical powers as "inherited" and often still tinged with *sahala* (the magical power and luminescent glow, which, according to some Angkola today, once attached to the raja of large village clusters).

Second, the form of presentation or transmission of Batak folk statements about their society has also changed. Much of Angkola adat was once set out in stark, essentially "asocial" statements. This was a language of taboo and immediate punishment for violations of adat rules. The idiom was asocial in that the human role in fashioning this structure of rules was largely hidden. Today, by contrast, much Angkola speech about Angkola society is overtly ethical in character, recommending, for instance, certain courses of action in village and town life because they will foster good community relations. With the focus now increasingly upon the social benefits of different adat rules, Angkola adat is becoming a moral system in many important areas. Bonds between human beings are coming to be seen as having the character of social contracts, not simple immutable patterns of the natural universe. This, of course, represents a major secularization of an Indonesian adat system. The transition from ritualized courtship duels to novelistic dialogues between men and women can be viewed in this wider context.

A final point should be made about the social position of Angkola oral and written speech today. At one level, Angkola's literature of kinship is a product of the kinship system as an institutional entity and its ongoing history of change. The various genres of oral adat literature are clearly structured by the role system of Batak kinship: many of the major genres of ritual speech are speech forms that flow between categories of kinsmen. The traditional adat literature as a whole, in fact, is a vast legitimacy framework for this system of patrilineal descent and asymmetrical marriage alliance. Modern fiction in Angkola Batak and Indonesian is also

ger, and Hansfried Kellner in their *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Conscientiousness* (New York: Random House, 1973) is the one used here. Modernization is both an institutional process, linked to a technologized economy and the spread of bureaucratic organizations, and a process of ideational change in individual "traditional worlds."

16. For examples of such revision of adat rituals, see my "A Modern Batak *Horja*: Innovation in Sipirok Adat Ceremonial," *Indonesia*, 27 (April 1979), pp. 103-28.

a symbolic product of the kinship system as an institutional reality. The attention to change in present-day adat orations and modern fiction has also been engendered by change in Batak kinship at the institutional level. However, literature on kinship is clearly much more than a simple "reflection" of some set of institutional arrangements.¹⁷ Batak literature is a symbolic system of great aesthetic beauty and evocative power, and as such it serves its audience and readership as a way through which they can shape and reshape their apprehension of their kinship system. In other words, Batak literature plays an *active* symbolic role in Batak kinship as well as a simple "reflective" one. New fictional forms of Batak literature dealing with kinship themes serve the population as a sort of symbolic crucible for rethinking village kinship and recasting its imagery into a form more compatible with the urbanizing and increasingly nonagricultural Batak communities in large homeland towns and rantau cities. The Batak are today engaged in no less a task than reinventing their kinship system as Indonesia modernizes. Batak modern fiction appears to be playing an increasingly important role in this transformation.

17. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz finds a similar active role for Balinese games and art forms in his "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 412-53. He notes that such stylized symbol systems allow a people to "read and re-read" the structure and paradoxes of their culture. In this view, cockfights are interpretive events, folk commentary texts on Balinese status hierarchy, allowing the participants to mull over their social system in a metaphorical mode. Batak literature may serve much the same interpretive function for its authors and audience. Such interpretive symbol systems can also be creative media for changing the social definition of parts of the world. James Peacock's *Rites of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) is also a useful guide in considering modern Batak literature and its role as an active modernizer, for Batak fiction may serve its Batak readership as a "rite of passage" into Indonesian modernity in much the same way that *ludruk* folk plays help initiate working-class Surabayans into new forms of social relationships compatible with modern urban life.

