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Pakpak adat and kinship terminology; an assessment of their meaning and mutual relationship

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PAKPAK ADAT AND KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY: AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR MEANING AND MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP¹

This article will explore the meaning of the term *adat* (currently used by nearly all indigenous ethnic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia) in Pakpak Batak society by establishing a connection between adat and certain features of the Pakpak kinship system. Pakpak adat is the sum of social rules verbalized by Pakpak society. Today, many of these rules are defunct and others are vestiges of a once highly refined system. Formerly, the Pakpak possessed a "prescriptive system" of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage in which wife-taking patrilineages (*anakberru*) gave material wealth to their wife-giving lineages (*kula kula* or *puang*) in exchange for women and spiritual sanction. This article will suggest that formerly "adat" was designed to express and propagate this asymmetric prescriptive alliance system. The discussion is divided into four sections:

- section 1*, after discussing the history and meaning of the term itself, will indicate that Pakpak adat should be distinguished from the Dutch concept, although today the two converge;
- section 2* will describe the disappearance of adat in contemporary Simsim, a section of Pakpakland (see map);
- section 3* will analyze a small part of an adat feast in the hope of elucidating an aspect of adat;
- section 4* will use terminological distinctions in the sector of grandchildren to illustrate the role of adat in the kinship system.

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1. The terms *adat* and *istiadat* (borrowings from Arabic) occur in many languages throughout the Indonesian archipelago. The words probably entered the Batak languages recently from Malay. Van der Tuuk's *Woordenboek* (1861) does not list the terms, Joustra's *Karo Woordenboek* (1907: 73) includes "adat" only as a synonym for the

indigenous *bitjara*, and Stap's Toba *Woordenlijst* (1912) indicates that *adat* is a synonym for the indigenous terms *somal/hasomalan* (s.v. 23, 25, 72) and *peam* (s.v. 72). *Istiadat* seems to be an even more recent introduction and does not appear in the Batak *woordenboek*.

Although various dictionaries translate both terms as "tradition or custom"² and Pakpak informants state that the words are synonymous, usage indicates a significant difference. *Adat* denotes specific prescribed practices such as obligations for wife-givers or wife-takers, avoidances, rules pertaining to land tenure, as well as punishments for theft, murder and other delicts. *Adat* is thus a social fact in the early Durkheimian sense — it consists of "ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him". *Adat* practices tend to be frequently infringed by individuals attempting to maximize their particular situations in relation to the group. *Istiadat* connotes customary practices which might evoke objection if ignored, but are not punishable according to specified rules. The rare individuals who ignore *istiadat* are seldom striving to maximize their situations; negligence of *istiadat* involves a non-conformity which lowers the individual's status within his society. The difference between *adat* and *istiadat* is the difference between society and culture, the one governs the relationship among men, the other expresses the society's relationship with the non-social, viz.

adat : *istiadat* :: punishment : negative sanction :: society : culture

The distinction is implicit in Marsden's (1812: 6) *Malay Dictionary*, which includes in its translation of *istiadat* the word "etiquette", but is less clear in later Malay dictionaries.

The concept of "adat law" (*adatrecht*) was conceived in 1754, when the Dutch East India Company created a commission on *adatrecht* intended to codify Javanese *adat*. It was believed that the "natives" could be more efficiently administered if the judicial system were expressed in terms understandable to them. The commission was unsuccessful, but the plan to create a synthetic "native" law congruent with Dutch law remained. Daendels (a Governor-General of Java, 1808-1811, who formulated a judicial policy) believed that to eliminate "Javanese laws, customs and jurisdiction in favor of the foreign system was as wrong as to cling exclusively to the indigenous system" (Kat Angelino II: 162). The neologism *adatrecht*, coined by the East India Company, was neglected for 150 years until it was used by Snouck Hurgronje (1906: 14), who became interested in the legal implications

of adat while stationed in Aceh. *Adatrecht*, as an instituted field of investigation, was established by Van Vollenhoven (1874-1933) during the first decades of the twentieth century.

With rare perspicacity, Van Vollenhoven attempted to divorce native adat from the tendencies and expectations of Dutch society. He argued that indigenous adat could not be divided into particular domains of jurisdiction; although to the Dutch mind, a separation between personal rights and property rights or between public and private law was a self-evident necessity, for the "native" such distinctions were inconceivable. He warned against the Dutch misconception that adat was derived from religion, and like many pioneers he established an opposite position in order to dramatize his change of view. Van Vollenhoven's insistence that religion and adat law be regarded separately emerges from the inference that since Moslem natives do not have a specific Moslem adat law and since pagan natives do not have a specific pagan law, the influence of religion on adat is insignificant. Thus, a distinction was sometimes made between "indigenous law" — adat free of religious requirements — and "adat law" which subsumed the indigenous law.

In *Het adatrecht van Nederlandsch-Indië* (published as a serial from 1906 until 1931), Van Vollenhoven divided the archipelago into nineteen "adat law areas"³ (with districts further distinguished within particular areas). Civil servants within each area were trained by Van Vollenhoven to conduct rigorous investigations of native adat. By condemning the use of Dutch legal terminology, he encouraged the study of the vernacular and the subsequent use of native terms in all formulations of "adat law".

The Dutch government divided the population of the East Indies into three groups (1. natives, 2. Europeans, 3. non-indigenous Asians — primarily Chinese), each group judicially administered by a particular legal code. In all dealings with Europeans, non-Europeans were governed by European law, and native law was exercised according to a Dutch model. Despite the concerted efforts of Van Vollenhoven and his students, the application of an adat law consonant with native views was never realized (see Hoebel & Schiller, 1948).

B. ter Haar, a pupil of Van Vollenhoven, saw a necessity for unifying the diverse segments of adat law while distinguishing their individual character. A professor at the Law College in Batavia,⁴ Ter Haar perceived that a developing mobility among the indigenous population led to increased interaction between individuals of different law areas and therefore required uniformity at the level of administration. His

comprehensive manual (1948), published shortly before Dutch withdrawal from the Indies, represents a synthesis of adat field reports and constitutes a manifesto of the institution established by Van Vollenhoven.

The whole "doctrine of values" of the community remains misunderstood. In place of it, a penal code based on the "doctrine of values" of western relationships and on the western penal law is imposed from above. The meeting is a collision; the authority of the government enforces its method, although the method strikes at vital portions of the things the people want to maintain in independence. (1948: 218).

...in a law with "strange" (foreign, exotic) premises and with a "strange" social environment, the Dutch meaning cannot be valid as Dutch meaning; as such it would bring a "strange" element into adat law... These are just so many barriers between adat law and the conception of it as formulated in Dutch... (1948: 225)

Van Vollenhoven's slogan of 1905 — "no judge-made law" — was, in its limited aim, both understandable and efficient as a fact in his struggle against "unification" and the intrusion of western law. Now... it must be replaced by the principle, "judge-made law for the Indonesian firmly based on folk-law". (1948: 231)

This crystallization of *adatrecht* approximately coincided with the end of Dutch colonial power; thus no sooner was *adatrecht* given its full formulation than it was rendered obsolete.

Those studies of Indonesian adat conducted after World War II were impelled by a different impetus (an attempt to "preserve" the native heritage or to contribute to knowledge) far removed from the Leiden Enlightenment whose impossible aspiration to administer a meaningful justice to the natives of the archipelago inspired a field of thought stunted in its infancy. Perhaps the disintegration foreseen by Vergouwen could have been thwarted by a government sensitive to the insights of Van Vollenhoven:

In these communities this law is withering through neglect and through the breaking down of the chiefs' authority instead of developing, and it is becoming disassociated from the life of the people which, as a result, is exposed to the dangers of disintegration. Customary law can only continue to be what it should be, a firm base for preserving the unity of society, by a wellguided administration of the law by the chiefs. (Vergouwen 1964: 136)

The detailed studies of Batak customary law⁵ stand as promising receptacles with the implicit expectation that here might crystallize a tradition as precise as the law of Imperial China. Yet, thirty years after

Dutch departure from Batakland, one may peruse these legal studies and wonder in what way the Dutch understood adat.

Vergouwen, who wrote the definitive work on Toba adat, experienced confusion when confronted with decisions contrary to the adat system instituted at the University of Leiden.

There is . . . a danger of arbitrary action by the Batak chiefs and judges, but one has to accept the fact that the Toba Batak justiciaries can be such untractable people, can adopt such surprising attitudes and can defy all reasonableness, so that an orderly communal life would be impossible if they were not governed by a firm hand acting within the confines of the law but without too many formal restrictions. (Vergouwen 1964: 368)

His recourse to "surprising attitudes" which "defy all reasonableness" indicates that he was oblivious to many social factors which were expressed by words and actions which he regarded as unreasonable. Like his Dutch compatriots,⁶ Vergouwen could only see the Batak with his Dutch reason and could only formulate a legal system congruent with his reason.

It must always be remembered that the Dutch Batak specialists were colonial administrators⁷ whose commitment to Dutch involvement in Batakland was inseparable from their view of the Batak. Vergouwen, perhaps the least ethnocentric and one of the most dedicated of the specialists, was able to naively write:

A life for a life . . . was a guiding principle in a case of murder or homicide. Fortunately, these corrective measures are now all canalised in the regular administration of justice, operated under the aegis of a more humane thinking Government which has relieved villages and territories of the task of taking action against the more serious forms of crime. (Vergouwen 1964: 363)

Just as the replacement of jungle paths by paved roads was regarded as a progressive advancement by the scholar-administrators, so also the substitution of Dutch judicial wisdom for indigenous adat was believed to be a philanthropic contribution.

The Dutch perceived adat as a primitive expression of law, a proto-law, which could only achieve constancy (to which it was surely striving) with codification. The "random" and "inexplicable" requirements or the "surprising attitudes" were seen as the result of individual decisions in a flawed system which failed to express collective wisdom. Van Vollenhoven's declaration, "no judge-made law", was an expression

of a revolutionary insight which was discarded not only by the Dutch government, but by his students as well.

* * *

2. It is difficult to definitely isolate the meaning of adat for the Pakpak society which existed prior to colonial rule. The Dutch administration gradually communicated its own interpretation of the term to the areas which it administered, thus altering the meaning of a word which was itself an adoption. Adat, providing a structure for the replication of Pakpak society through the generations, was a rigid web of forces permeating all areas of social life. The regulation of punishments for misdemeanours and felonies was only a part of adat. In pre-annexation Pakpak society, adat regulated all actions among individuals and groups, thereby encompassing all social activity. The reduction of adat to the Dutch concept of law was a decay from essence to rules of action and demanded a transformation from a closed society containing its own being to an open society dependent upon outside structures.

Most adult Pakpak in Simsim are presently able to describe, in varying degrees of detail, a picture of Pakpak society prior to Dutch colonial rule. Descriptions of and comments about this past society are approximately consistent. A bellicose, cannibalistic community is described, a community living among, communicating with and worshipping spirits. Some individuals are able to discuss mediums (*perjilujong*) who communicated with ancestral spirits and sought their advice. Adults of all ages are able to name the locations and boundaries of the sacred lands in their community and expatiate with occasional enthusiasm upon the prohibitions which once surrounded these areas. A small number of old people claim to remember having eaten the flesh of their villages' enemies after a successful battle; some will even specify the parts of the human body which were most savory. People above the age of fifty remember having practised avoidance, although at the present time most of them have discontinued the custom. Nonetheless, young men and women, who have never observed avoidance, are able to describe, often speaking in the present tense, how speech and social contact was prohibited with the appropriate individuals. Old people discussing such topics as burial rites or marriage rules, draw upon an extensive terminology using precise terms for various offences and procedures. None of these terms nor the actions to which they refer are currently operable.

Toba adat provides an illuminating contrast to the Pakpak system.

Although the Toba were occupied by the Dutch fifty years prior to the Pakpak, Toba adat is more complete and coherent than Pakpak adat. In a literal sense, Toba adat was preserved by the Dutch occupation. By 1910, Dutch interest in "adat law" had become a firmly institutionalized area of Dutch government and academics. The establishment of government centers in Tapanuli was accompanied by the meticulous study of adat. Like skilled taxidermists, Dutch scholars mounted the skin of adat, preparing the superficial texture of prescriptions and proscriptions in a lifelike manner. Although Toba adat, like the Pakpak adat of a later period, was undermined by Dutch and missionary influence, the artificial features of a formerly vibrant system were exposed to scrutiny. The Dutch educated promising Toba in Dutch-language schools or occasionally in Holland and these educated Toba were encouraged to write about their adat. Contemporary Toba are able to draw upon the popularised materials assembled by the ranks of educated Toba prepared by the Dutch.

Conversely, the Pakpak do not have such a tradition; the only legacy which they have inherited consists of vague stories about the occupations. Popular books have not been written by Pakpak (or by others) about Pakpak adat or genealogy. Perhaps with the realization that all knowledge of Pakpak adat now resides in a very small number of informed old people, a five-day meeting was organised in Sidikalang in March 1970. This gathering resulted in a mimeographed pamphlet: *Seminar Adat Istiadat Pakpak - Dairi*. The sparse information contained in the pamphlet suffers from its presentation in the Indonesian language, a language with which very few middle-aged and elderly Pakpak are comfortable. Allowing for this shortcoming, the data provided are nonetheless sadly incomplete: no references are made to key factors such as avoidances or the preferred spouse. Consequently the information which is provided is distorted by these and similar gaps.

Nearly nine years have elapsed since the *Seminar* was mimeographed and now many Pakpak when discussing adat cite information which they have read in the pamphlet. Discussions with *pengatuai* (adat experts) in a dozen villages revealed that these individuals were not able to substantially elaborate upon the fragments presented in the *Seminar*. Pakpak adat, unlike Toba adat, did not experience the taxidermal skills of Dutch adat scholars; the fragments which now remain cannot be reassembled, nor can they be detached from the new areas attributed to adat.

Adat in contemporary Pakpak society is a superimposition, a pale

wraith of what it once may have been. Fifty years ago, Vergouwen was able to elicit sufficient information to write his detailed book, but a comparable work on Pakpak adat could not be composed today. It is not possible to guess when Pakpak traditional social structure and adat were last intact, nor is it possible to guess when the last person thoroughly knowledgeable in adat died. Pakpak adat may have been in decline at the time of Dutch arrival in Dairi; evidence indicates that the process of decline accelerated during Dutch rule. The oldest people alive today were very young when the Dutch arrived in Pakpak-land; most *pengatui* were born after Dutch and German missionaries had opened schools in Dairi.

With the establishment of Dutch colonial law and the Protestant church, many punishments dictated by adat became mitigated. Adat precedent regarding slavery, warfare and burial rites (and other domains) became superfluous. Systems of thought introduced by missionaries became mixed with adat, so that at the present time the acts of praying before eating and removing one's hat while eating are regarded as adat. Perhaps as a consequence the meaning of the term became altered. However, the organisation of feasts or the resolution of familial disputes still fall under the dominion of adat, adat dictating the appropriate gifts which must be exchanged and the foods which must be eaten.

* * *

3. Feasts (*kerja*) provide a center from which kinship relations radiate. Because of their intangible character, *kerja* have eroded less quickly than other segments of Pakpak adat/*istiadat*. *Kerja*, by enabling the individual to comprehend adat by means of active experience, are regarded as adat's essential realization.

Kerja are divided into two kinds, which express in a variety of ways the fundamental opposition between good and bad, life and death. (1) *Kerja baik*⁸ are "joyful" feasts, which include marriages, and serve to affirm the continuance of the society at the beginning of a new cycle or in the process of a cycle. (2) *Kerja jahat*⁹ are "sad" feasts, which include the funeral of grandparents, and serve to testify that a cycle has been successfully completed.

There are many types of *kerja* (informants have named nineteen types of *kerja baik*), which are classified in one of three graduated categories. (1) *Males bulung simernaik*, the highest, required that a minimum of three buffaloes be slaughtered and occurred during a

minimum period of two days and nights. The great feasts (*kerja aur*) in which the inhabitants of an *aur* (district) gathered periodically were the largest and least frequent of the *males bulung simernaik*; ideally fifteen buffaloes were slaughtered and the feast continued for a week. Other types of feast in this category involved gatherings of all the members of a particular patriclan (*marga*) or of all the *marga* utilizing a particular market (*onan*). Although the last *kerja aur* in Simsim (see map) occurred more than fifty years ago, informants describe its place within the classification of *kerja* without ever observing that there will never be another. (2) *Males bulung buluh*, an intermediate level of feasts, require that a pig or goat be slaughtered and possess a minimal period of a day and night. (3) *Males bulung sampula*, the lowest level of feasts, require a chicken rather than meat and do not exceed a day in duration. These feasts are usually associated with a funeral but occasionally may celebrate a marriage engagement.

The three levels of feasts correspond to the three levels of the universe in the former cosmological system¹⁰ and correlate with the ranking of wife-givers, lineage mates and wife-takers in a tripartite system.¹¹ Superimposed upon this triadic division of feasts is a quaternary ranking based upon the area included (and hence upon the number of participants):

1. feasts for the *aur* (*kerja aur*),
2. feasts for the *marga* (*kerja marga*),
3. feasts for the village (*kerja kuta*),
4. feasts for the apartments (*kerja pejabujabu*).

Feasts for the apartments¹² are the smallest and most frequent and contrast with the feasts for the *aur*, which are the largest and least frequent feasts. Although the informant will admit, if directly questioned, that *kerja aur* will never again occur, the *kerja aur* is nonetheless included as a part of the system.

The most important type of feast, and the one which occurs the least frequently, is *mengkerboi*, a *kerja jahat* which signifies the death of a *sayur ntua*, a grandparent. Most informants state simply that a *sayur ntua* is a grandparent who has seen his (or her) grandchildren; but this definition, which is now prevalent, is only a fragment of a more elaborate and meaningful explanation. A small number of elderly informants state that a *sayur ntua* is a *gelluh ikandang hukum*, a person who has adhered faultlessly to the requirements of adat and for this reason has enjoyed a long and fertile life. A *sayur ntua* has produced

not only grandchildren but great-great-grandchildren also, and it is through these last descendants that the *sayur ntua* is defined. It is only upon his death that the *gelluh ikandang hukum* becomes a *sayur ntua* and is ritually honored in a special feast, *mate sayur ntua*, the death of the *sayur ntua*.

Preparations for the feast begin upon the arrival at the home of the moribund of his *kula kula* (wife-givers), *sinina* (lineage mates) and *anakberru* (wife-takers). The *kula kula* bring food (*nakan pangambat*) consisting of cooked rice and chicken; the *anakberru* give food (*nakan sulangulang*) consisting of cooked rice and meat; the food presented by the *sinina* may consist of cooked rice and fish or meat. It is the duty of the *kula kula* to *menambarnambari*, to oppose the death of the grandparent by means of kind attention, medicines and ritual. Upon receipt of the *anakberru*'s food, the dying grandparent must give his blessing, which ensures that the *anakberru* and his descendants will adhere to adat, and will therefore prosper and multiply.

While the *sayur ntua* is dying, the three groups arrange the feast, deciding the number of buffaloes to be slaughtered and negotiating the contribution of each. The three groups must decide the number of days the corpse will lie in state in the home prior to burial. This is an economic decision, for throughout the interval between death and burial, food must be given to all visitors and the ritual drums (*genderang*) must be beaten.

After the *sayur ntua*'s demise, the *anakberru* give *oles* (woven cloth) to his heirs; the *kula kula* give chicken, uncooked rice, *nakan persinabul* (a kind of cooked rice), grass mats and baskets made from woven palm fronds to them. This presentation of gifts parallels the gifts given upon the birth of a child and combines the gift exchange of the wedding.

On the night following the death, a ratan cord is tied from a point near the head of the corpse to another arbitrary point. From the cord is hung the grass mat (*belagan*) and the woven cloth (*oles*) which are items of ritual exchange from the *kula kula* to the *anakberru* and from the *anakberru* to the *kula kula*, respectively. During the evening of the first day of the feast, all participants dance around the coffin in a particular sequence, beginning with the *sayur ntua*'s lineage (*dengan sebeltek*), which is divided into three groups: 1) *permangmang* (the oldest); 2) *perekurekur* (all except the oldest and the youngest); 3) *pertulan tengah* (the youngest). The conclusion of the three dances of the lineage is followed by the dances of the wife-giving group, which also dances in three separate divisions determined by the chronology

of the establishment of the alliances. The dances of the wife-givers are followed by the dances of the wife-takers, which are also divided into three divisions. In an alternative version¹³ of the dancing, a fourth group, the *sinina* (members of the *sayur ntua*'s *marga* who are not members of the village lineage), dance after the wife-givers in three groups homologous to the sequence of divisions of the *dengan sebeltek*. A fourth (or fifth), final sequence of dancing includes those who are not related by kinship to the *sayur ntua* and unmarried young men and women (*naposo*).¹⁴

On the final feast day, a grave is prepared through the mutual labor of the wife-givers, lineage and wife-takers of the *sayur ntua*. The coffin is carried by the wife-takers, and as it is being transported out of the house, the ancestral wife-takers (mother's mother's brother and his sons) attempt to block the coffin's passage in a symbolic obstruction.

Prior to departing from the village, the wife-takers may request any non-durable possession of the deceased as a gift. On the eighth day after the burial, the *puang* must return to the village with *mengariari tendi*, a gift of rice and meat for the spirit of the deceased which ensures that the spirits of the heirs will not be kidnapped by the "hungry" *tendi* (spirit) of the grandparent.

This feast expresses the full intentionality of adat. By providing a series of *tableaux vivants*, the dancing represents, in a full yet apprehensible scale, all the groups linked through the dicta of adat. In a short span of time, the individual is able to see the complete series of kinship groups and the relationships among them, which are represented by the sequence of the dancing and by the rhythms (a particular rhythm for the wife-givers, lineage and wife-takers) played on the drums. The order of the dancing thus gives tangible form to the ranked order of the kinship groups. The collaboration of the three groups in the preparation of the grave, like the collaboration of the three groups in the formation of a village, expresses the fundamental edict that the individual's environment must always be the product of an effort of wife-givers, wife-takers and lineage mates. Only through their harmonious association can a long-term endeavour be propitiated. The wife-givers, whose blessing is the *sine qua non* of health and prosperity, must attempt to prevent the *sayur ntua* from succumbing to death and thus terminating their relationship. By procuring a shaman and preparing medicines, the wife-givers signify their will that the relationship not be concluded by death. Returning after the feast with a gift of food for the *sayur ntua*'s soul, they demonstrate the continued relationship with

the *sayur ntua* and with his *marga*, which is protected by their gift. The ancestral wife-givers, in a final gesture of denial, impede the journey of the corpse from house to grave, indicating that the cycle which they initiated was not intended to end.

* * *

4. The first-born grandchild, who, if male, is entitled to receive certain gifts, is termed *kempulemolemo*. All other grandchildren of the second descending generation are referred to as *kempu*; sex is never indicated. Grandchildren are only distinguished by sex at the funeral, where male grandchildren are referred to as *kempujolo* (*jolo* = front) and female grandchildren as *kempupodi* (*podi* = back). At the third descending generation, an individual may specify three types of grandchildren:

1. *kempunono* — daughter's children's children;
son's daughter's children;
2. *kempunte* — son's son's children;
3. *kempu* — children's children's children of any kin;
spouse or spouse's sibling of any grandchild.

The rare individual who lives long enough may specify three types of grandchildren in the fourth descending generation:

1. *kempunono* — daughter's children's children's children;
son's daughter's children's children;
2. *kempunini* — son's son's son's children;
3. *kempu* — children's children's children's children of any kin;
spouse or spouse's sibling of any grandchild.

In brief, grandchildren may be variously distinguished, depending upon the context: 1) at the level of address there is only one term for all grandchildren (*kempu*); 2) at the level of ritual differentiation, male grandchildren (*kempujolo*) are distinguished from female grandchildren (*kempupodi*); 3) at the level of descent (*kempu*, *kempunte*, *kempunini*) or generation (*kempu*, *kempunono*, *kempunte -nini*) there are three types of grandchildren; 4) at the level of terminological distinction there are four types of grandchildren (*kempu*, *kempunono*, *kempunini*, *kempunte*); or 5) five if the first-born (*kempulemolemo*) is included as a distinct type.

It may be seen that grandchildren exist at three hierarchic levels in three distinct ways:

1. the three generations of grandchildren measured by the system become increasingly significant as they descend: *kempu* are significant, *kempunte* are more significant still and *kempunini* are the most significant of all;
2. at the third descending generation the three types of grandchildren are ranked according to importance: *kempu* are the least important, *kempunte* the most important and *kempunono* are intermediate;
3. at the fourth descending generation the crucial *kempunini* is the most important, followed by the *kempunono* and finally by the *kempu*.

The hierarchic division into three duplicates — in two directions — the tripartite relationship which exists among the wife-givers, lineage mates and wife-takers. Yet, the division into three may become a division into four by including ego's children and may become a division into five by including ego himself.

The Pakpak explanation for the distinctions among *kempunte*, *kempunono* and *kempunini* is illustrated in figure 1 below:

Figure 1

Kempunte and *kempunini* are those grandchildren who still belong to ego's *marga*. A segment of a clan measured from ego to the *kempunini* is called a *sincundut*; according to adat, a person who has lived to create a *sincundut* is believed to have lived a complete life and need not continue to live any longer. When a *sincundut* has been formed there exists an *ikaccatutur*. The meaning of *ikacca* is "there are no more"; a *tutur* is a generation of kin, thus the literal meaning of

the term is "there are no more generations". The term refers to the termination of the counting of the descending generations which occurs with the birth of *kempunini*; after the *kempunini* no further generations of grandchildren are counted. A true *sayur ntua* is a person who has produced a female *kempunono* and a male *kempunini*.

Informants could suggest no explanation for why the distinctions are terminated at the fourth descending generation, nor were they consciously aware that at the third and fourth descending levels, three types of grandchildren were in each case specified. Unlike the triadic division of *puang/sinina/anakberru*, the triadic divisions of grandchildren exist at a different level. What is the meaning of the divisions? The explanation provided by figure 1 explains only that the descendants of males are terminologically distinguished because they propagate the *marga*. It does not explain why *kempunono* are distinguished from *kempu* or why *kempunte* are distinguished from *kempunini* or why the specifications end at the fourth descending level.

The terms *kempunono*, *kempunte* and *kempunini* may only be used directly by an individual — i.e. they are not terms of reference used in relation to a deceased ancestor. It is therefore probable that these terms were rarely used. How could it have been otherwise in an area where life expectancy was always contingent upon the caprice of war and disease? But if the actual number of *sayur ntua* was negligible, could it be the case that a nomenclature existed for the benefit of those rare individuals whose longevity rendered them freaks of nature (and social curiosities)?

It is a function of a kinship nomenclature (a social product) to structure a selection of relationships¹⁵ and not to provide a classification suitable for every possibility.

The terms may be illuminated if they are superimposed on an ideal diagram illustrating a number of patrilineages linked as wife-givers and wife-takers. At the third and fourth descending generations the *kempunte* and the *kempunini*, respectively, are the *kula kula* of the *kempunono*. (See figure 2.)

If a man from patrilineage A marries a woman from patrilineage B at the fourth descending generation, then his father (a *kempunono* descended through women) will be giving bridewealth to the *kulakula* (*kempunini* descended through men).

kempunono : *kempunini* :: *anakberru* : *kulakula* :: wife-taker : wife-giver

That a special funeral is given to the *sayur ntua* — he who possesses

a female *kempunono* and a male *kempunini* — is now meaningful. The death of a *sayur ntua*, like the marriage of a daughter, occasions the receipt of gifts by the *sayur ntua*'s family from the *anakberru*, the wife-taking family; like the marriage of a son, it also occasions the receipt of lesser gifts from the *kula kula*, the wife-giving family. Thus, the death of an individual who has produced grandchildren of a certain type, is accorded ritual attention similar to a marriage.

Figure 2

Sayur ntua illustrate, with the collection of grandchildren who socially define them, the fulfilment of the contract formed by marriage. If marriage creates alliances and promises the perpetuation of the social group, then the grandparent and the tiers of grandchildren who descend from him are the confirmation of the alliances and the realization of the promise. If the grandparent has produced one or more third generation grandchildren of each type, then these direct descendants ideally will be members of different clans linked as wife-givers and wife-takers. At the third descending generation, three lineages — all descendants of ego — will be linked through marriage alliances. But not until the fourth generation, when their children marry, will the alliances be assured. For it is the fathers who pay bridewealth for their sons, and it is the fathers who give their daughters to their *anakberru*.

From ego's perspective, his descendants are *sinina* (*kempunini*) and

anakberru (*kempunono*). From a *kempunini*'s perspective, his ancestors are the *sinina* and the *puang* of ego (and the *puang* of the *puang*). Just as ego can never produce *puang*, the *kempunini*'s ancestors can never be *anakberru*. The union of the kin measured from ego down to his fourth generation descendants and measured up from these descendants to ego's generation encompasses the entire system.

Pakpak adat specifies five clans linked through marriage (see figure 3)

Ego's lineage (*dengan sibeltek*) is in the center of a group of five ranked lineages linked through marriage.

The wife-giving lineage (*puang*) and the ancestral wife-givers (*puang benna*) are ranked above ego; wife-takers (*anakberru*) and the wife-takers of the wife-takers (*berru labbe*) are ranked below ego.

Figure 3

and in addition indicates that after five generations descent in relation to a member of society is no longer considered. An irreducible double modality of five in which ego is the keystone and the *kempunini* the final product is given by adat. The synchronic linkage of five *marga* is opposed to the diachronic connection of descent among five generations. The five *marga* and the five generation lineage segments are two axes around which the total system revolves, the first spatial (each *marga* usually residing in a different village but at the same time), the second temporal (direct descendants of ego residing in the same

village at different times). With the birth of a *kempunini*, the spatial and the temporal axes exist simultaneously — they are parallel rather than perpendicular. This ephemeral coexistence was produced by the *sayur ntua* and is terminated by his death. The *sayur ntua* who has produced a *sincundut* has reduced genealogy to silence, for “there are no more generations” to count — the cycle has been reproduced and the alliances so successfully tempered that the clans are inseparably linked by blood and prescribed exchanges.

Thus the feast, *mate sayur ntua*, is the ultimate expression of successful kinship relations. Participating in the feast are the five clans implicated by adat, with representatives of five generations all linked through kinship relations radiating from the deceased *sayur ntua*. The prime number five may then be seen as equivalent to the prime number one — for five clans to the depth of five generations constitute the total system.

Forty years ago, Davis and Warner assumed that a kinship terminology is “an instrument in which people *think* about kinship” (1937: 298, emphasis included). This formulation was not atypical of an American mechanistic approach which regarded society as a machine whose parts were designed to achieve ends. Tending always toward an unnecessary “historicism”, priorities and purposes contrived to give life to a metaphor. But despite the crudity of their expression, Davis and Warner correctly realized that a kinship terminology can not be separated from thought. Kinship terms are ordered by a unique grammar which is detached from the grammar of the language which contains it. These terms and the rules of order which determine their application enable succeeding generations to unconsciously revolve the idea of social relations which, for the society, must remain an unreachable noumenon.

Thus the complex of terms, *kempunono*, *kempunte* and *kempunini*, exist not for their application but rather for the thought which they contain. They are a code communicating the possibilities and the ultimate goal of the total system. Usually the relationship between a kinship term and its denotata is the relationship between signifier and signified; but in this instance the relationship is reversed and the terms are signified by individuals who, because of their rarity, usually never exist outside the realm of thought and language.

Morgan's well known error was the *petitio principii* of assuming an extendability and a material translation of terms prior to their analysis. Thus, if all the men of ego's first ascending generation are addressed

by the same term, Morgan assumed that all the terms could be translated as genitor because an ancestral promiscuity once rendered doubtful the identity of the real genitor. But, stripped of its assumptions, Morgan's approach is not reduced to a sterile methodological anachronism, for Morgan correctly intuited that a set of kinship terms may contain the idea of a past social organization. Apprehended in mutual conjunction, a group of terms may provide a receptacle for the communication — at the syncretic level of the unconscious — of the ideal structure to which the social system forever strives. It was the purpose of adat not to institute a system of punishments and rewards (as the Dutch imagined), but rather to communicate the undifferentiated essence of the ideal system.

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NOTES

- ¹ This article derives, in part, from field research conducted in North Sumatra during 1977 and early 1978. I am indebted to *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia* (The Indonesian Institute of Science) for sponsoring the research and I am grateful to the University of London Central Research Fund for a Grant-in-Aid. Without the assistance of these agencies the research would not have been possible. I would like to thank S. A. Niessen who read an earlier draft of this paper and corrected several linguistic oversights.
- ² J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong (1948) challenged the validity of the concept of "customary law" (implying that the term adat should be differently translated) without offering an alternative.
- ³ See Van Vollenhoven (1925: 148) or Ter Haar (1948 Map). There are 6 "adat law areas" in Sumatra, 3 in Java, 4 in Celebes (Sulawesi) and 5 in Eastern Indonesia.
- ⁴ Ter Haar, a former judge, returned to Holland at the outbreak of war and died in the concentration camp Buchenwald in 1941.
- ⁵ Extensive information pertaining to Batak adat is available in *adatrecht-bundels*. Four extensive studies were written on Toba adat: Boemi (1925), Haga (1930), Ypes (1932) and Vergouwen (1933).
- ⁶ Compare, for instance, Ter Haar's observation (1948: 215, emphasis added): The fines for delicts are established in a specific relation to the offense, which cannot be further explained; for example, three plates for an ordinary insult, three plates and a pig for a serious insult, ten plates for insulting a chief... This is one sample of the relation between the delict and fine taken at random from thousands of others, all *as inexplicable as this*.
- ⁷ Among others were Vergouwen (an administrator), Keuning (a *controleur*), Van Ossenbruggen (president of the high court in Batavia), Stap (a *controleur*), Neumann (a *controleur*), Ypes (a Resident), Tideman (a Resident), and Korn (a Resident).
- ⁸ Cf. the Indo-Malay "baik" = good, nice.

- ⁹ Cf. the Indo-Malay "jahat" = bad, wicked.
It is probable that these two terms (see note 8 above) are recent alterations of an older form suggested by some informants: *kerja ndahat* and *kerja nbebhaik*.
- ¹⁰ Prior to the acceptance of the religions introduced by missionaries, the Pakpak divided the "universe" into upper, middle and lower worlds. Tobing, in his study of Toba religion, discussed in detail the tripartite division of the universe which is homologous to the division of kin.
- ¹¹ All kin belong to one of three categories in a system which forbids overlapping: *anakberru* (wife-takers), *sinina* (lineage mates), and *kula kula* or *puang* (wife-givers).
- ¹² A *jabu* was the section of an adat house (*bagas*) occupied by a nuclear family.
- ¹³ It should be emphasized that I never witnessed such a feast and the topic of analysis is at all times the informants' account. The brief description provided is a compilation of a number of accounts — needless to add, no two accounts are ever identical and all informants frequently observed that adat varies from area to area and sometimes from village to village. I did attend a *kerja simen* (a *kerja baik* celebrating the construction of a cement tomb for a living grandfather) and observed a sequence of dancing similar to the one described.
- ¹⁴ A man (or woman) is not a full member of the community until marriage.
- ¹⁵ The word "relationship" is here used not in the social sense but in the mathematical sense that relationships "exist" whether or not they are acknowledged.

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