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Tradition, matriliny and change among the Minangkabau of Indonesia

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Minangkabau is perhaps best known in anthropological circles for its system of matrilineal clans and lineages. This fame is more than anything else due to the important work of de Josselin de Jong (1951) based on a vast amount of literature devoted to the study of Minangkabau adat (customary law) which appeared in the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century.

The discussion of traditional Minangkabau social organisation more recently has stimulated a considerable amount of work on the nature of social change in West Sumatra, and in particular on the effects of the penetration of capitalism on matrilineal organisation. Gough, for example, suggests that "traditional" matrilineal systems break down as a result of "economic changes brought about by contact with Western industrial nations". She argues that the dissolution of matriliney means "that matrilineal groups disintegrate. In their place, the elementary family emerges as the key kinship group . . ." (in Schneider and Gough, eds., 1962: 631). She cites the work of de Josselin de Jong and Schrieke (1955) in her attempt to show that such is the case for Minangkabau.

The student of modern Minangkabau society is, however, faced with a curious paradox. While Schrieke, writing of the period after the turn of the century, discussed the breakdown of matriliney, and while predictions of its demise are frequent (cf. Maretin, 1961), matrilineal organisation seems to retain an important place in modern Minangkabau. This "survival" has been described for urban areas in West Sumatra (cf. Evers, 1975), but as yet little has been published on the role of present-day matrilineal kinship in its more traditional setting, i.e. the nagari or villages of the Minangkabau heartland.

It is my intention in this article to present a synthesis of some material
collected during my own fieldwork in a Minangkabau nagari in order to shed some light on the processes of change described by these authors. In the second section of the article I shall turn to the problem of "traditional" society. Here I shall try to show that the processes of change have been misunderstood by many observers who have based their analyses on a false conception of Minangkabau society both before and during the period of colonial rule.

Finally I shall return to the paradox mentioned above. Here I shall discuss briefly the changes which followed the lifting of forced cultivation in West Sumatra in 1908, and show how the rhythm of commercial development in Indonesia accounts both for the persistence of some aspects of matrilineal organisation on the one hand, and the domination by other principles of organisation on the other. I shall argue that just as a deformed matrilineal system was preserved within colonial society, elements of matriliney have also been incorporated within the neo-colonial system.

I. MATRILINEAL ORGANISATION IN A MODERN MINANGKABAU NAGARI

An understanding of Minangkabau kinship is essential for understanding the social organisation at village level and beyond. The term "matrilineal organisation" is, however, imprecise because it covers a number of analytically distinct aspects of Minangkabau social structure: an aspect of Minangkabau social structure in the past; an aspect of present-day social structure; an aspect of Minangkabau ideology in the past; an aspect of present-day ideology in West Sumatra; and finally the present-day conceptualisation of the importance of kinship in the past, i.e. an "idealisation" of kinship based on a past "golden age". This latter aspect of matrilineal adat has become even more involuted because of the tradition of local ethnography carried out by local adat scholars, foreign anthropologists and legal experts. In the nagari of Sungai Puar the ultimate authority on Minangkabau adat, according to the most respected clan chief, is "a book by some Dutchman who understood

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1 The field work in West Sumatra was carried out by the author between December 1970 and July 1972. It was financed by a research grant from the London-Cornell Project for Southeast Asia Studies, and sponsored in Indonesia by the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (L.I.P.I.). Several people have read and commented on earlier drafts of this article, although of course the author alone is responsible for the contents. I should therefore like to thank Professor P. E. de Josselin de Jong, Maila Stivens and Daniel Kahn-Fogel.
how we do things better than any of us”. For this reason all discussion of the role of matrilineal organisation which takes place within Minangkabau and in academic circles outside is highly ambiguous.

I shall therefore begin this paper with a discussion of the folk model based on my research in the highland nagari of Sungai Puar. While some reference will be made to local variation, an important problem for anyone wishing to speak generally of Minangkabau, I shall concentrate primarily on a single geographical unit in a single period of time. People of the nagari or village of Sungai Puar conceive of their kinship system as a systematic and symmetrical mode of social organisation based on the matrilineal kin group or suku. Such, however, is not strictly the case.

**FIGURE 1**
Levels of Kinship Organisation in Minangkabau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territorial framework</th>
<th>Minangkabau-wide</th>
<th>Nagari</th>
<th>Nagari</th>
<th>Jorong (Nagari section)</th>
<th>Usually a housing cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bodi-Caniago</td>
<td>Koto-Piliang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clan (Suku)</td>
<td>Phratry (Suku)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub clan (Suku)</td>
<td>Lineage (Suku, Panili, Paruik)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Place occupied by panghulu in Bungus
* Place occupied by panghulu in Sungai Puar

Genealogical affiliation with higher level unknown in most cases (denoted by broken vertical line)

Genealogical affiliation with higher level known, although precise genealogical tie unknown (denoted by unbroken vertical line)

*Suku* is used to refer to a number of different levels of matrilineal grouping (see Figure 1). At its most inclusive level a suku is one of the four pan-Minangkabau phratries founded by the matrilineal descendants of the two culture heroes: Datuak Parapatiah nan Sabatang and Datuak Katumangguangan. These four suku are named — Koto, Piliang, Bodi and Caniago — and grouped into two moieties. Although neither the phratries nor the moieties are discrete territorial units, all villages are thought to belong to one of the two moieties, Koto-Piliang or Bodi-Caniago. Sungai Puar is a Koto-Piliang village. This has certain consequences for local organisation which I shall not go into here (cf. de Josselin de Jong, 1951: 51 f).
At the next level down the system of segmentation becomes more complicated. Each nagari as we have seen is associated with one or the other of the two moieties. And yet each nagari is made up of the members of a number of suku which represent, in some sense, segments of the four phratries. In Sungai Puar there are five such suku, which I shall call clans: Koto, Piliang, Sikumbang, Pisang and Malayu. Again these are not territorially distinct. Each section of the village contains representative segments of each of the five village clans. In Sungai Puar the exact link between village clan and Minangkabau phratry was not entirely clear to the residents. While the clans Koto and Piliang were clearly recognised as segments of the two phratries of the same name, the place of the other three clans was not so clear. Interpretations varied as to the phratry associations of Pisang, Sikumbang and Malayu. Indeed some people suggested to me that no such link-up existed at all. Different nagari have different clans and the number is not a constant five. In Bungus, a coastal fishing village, there were seven clans. In Sungai Puar the clans are nothing more than ideally exogamous, named units. The two largest of these — Koto and Piliang — are divided into subclans, referred to by the clan name and a qualifying term. For example, Koto Musajik, Koto Gobah and Koto Salek Batuang are the three subclans that make up the clan Koto. The subclans are neither territorially discrete nor politically corporate.

The clans and subclans are further divided into unnamed segments also termed suku and headed by a chief or panghulu (term of address-Datuak). This group, which I choose to call a lineage2 is a group of people related matrilineally and, in Sungai Puar, with a single office of leadership. The pattern is slightly different elsewhere. In Bungus, for example, each village-level clan is headed by a panghulu, while in Sungai Puar this is not the case. Even these lineages may not be territorially distinct. A lineage of average size may consist of two or three household clusters and several isolated households in different parts of the village section. In almost all cases the households belonging to a single lineage were located in one of the five sections (jorong) of the village.

2 I use lineage here to refer to the lowest level of kin group in Sungai Puar with a single leader, the panghulu. The term is traditionally used by anthropologists to refer to a unilinear descent group in which all kin ties among its members are known. This is not quite the case here — there is some disagreement over the exact nature of ties to the common ancestress. Lineages are made up of smaller segments, in which the ties are clearer. However these smaller groups are informal, they are not separately named, nor do they have a formal leadership structure. Hence I retain lineage for the higher-level group.
In Limo Suku, the largest of the five territorial sections of Sungai Puar, there are 64 such lineage groups. These may be distinguished from the clan, whose name they hold, by referring to the honorary title (gala) of the chief of the lineage group. This title remains the same, even when a new chief (panghulu) is installed in office. In referring to his segment, someone might say “kami kamanakan Datuak Rangkayo nan Gadang”. This means, literally, that “we are the sisters’ children of the chief whose title is Richman the Big”. Sisters’ children is used in a classificatory sense here, without regard to generation, to refer to all lineage-mates of the chief, even though the chief himself may be of a junior generation. This lineage is one of the 30 segments of the clan Koto in Limo Suku, as well as a segment of the subclan Koto Musajik.

The process may be explained by Figure 2. Here I have outlined the segmentation of the clan Koto. Across the whole village of Sungai Puar it is divided into three subclans — Koto Gobah, Koto Musajik and Koto Salek Batuang — and each subclan has representative lineages in each of the five village sections (jorong). The leaders of closely related lineages within the subclan often bear similar titles. This is presumed to be the result of fission in the more recent past. When a lineage becomes too large the villagers assert that a segment within it might elect its own panghulu and split away, with the permission of the members of the mother lineage. The new panghulu is then expected to retain the title of the mother segment, either exactly or with the addition of a qualifier. This is illustrated by the case of the lineage of Datuak Tumangguang. The lineage split into two segments at some time in the past. The mother segment retained the title of Datuak Tumangguang for its panghulu. The daughter lineage retained the title, with the addition of the qualifier “nan Kayo” (the Rich), presumably
because the first holder of the office was exceptionally wealthy. In the other case illustrated in Figure 2 (descendants of Datuak Rangkayo nan Gadang), the segments all retained the title unaltered. They are distinguished by using the given name of the present holder of the panghulu-ship, e.g. "we are the sisters' children of Yahya Datuak Rangkayo nan Gadang" (Yahya being the given name of the present panghulu). In spite of what may have been the case in the past all lineage segments in Sungai Puar today are, for all intents and purposes of equal rank, regardless of their point of segmentation. This also holds for the various panghulu. While it has been suggested that in some nagari one panghulu from each clan was given the title of panghulu pwcua, denoting higher status, such is not the case for Sungai Puar.

The system is complicated further by two factors. First it is recognised that fusion as well as fission of lineages may take place. Sometimes this happens when a lineage loses population. It may then fuse with a closely related lineage. In the past, it is said, groups came from outside and had to fuse (malakok) with one of the original lineages. I know of people who have recently left Sungai Puar to live in neighbouring villages. In these cases, as well, they often join a closely related lineage. While in the past this may have had important status implications (cf. Bachtiar, 1967:373), today such differentials are relatively insignificant.

The second complicating factor is that with the declining importance of the suku, the office of panghulu is not always filled after the death of the incumbent. This situation arises if lineage-mates are not prepared to bear the expense of the ceremony necessary to install a new panghulu (the baralek badatuak), because there is no member of the lineage willing to take on the duties of the panghulu-ship (which in many cases go largely unrewarded), or because lineage members cannot agree among themselves upon a likely successor. A lineage without a living panghulu may still be referred to by the title of its panghulu, or it may fuse eventually with another lineage. For Datuak Rangkayo nan Gadang there are two such cases, in which a separate lineage has been preserved in spite of the fact that the office of panghulu has not been filled.

This model, as I have described it so far, is held by almost every person in Sungai Puar who has lived there for any length of time. There is a generalised concept of suku solidarity, a sort of moral code which is thought to bind suku-mates. (I use the term ambiguously on purpose here since suku solidarity feelings tend not to be attached to any particular level of segmentation). This may have some effect on
interpersonal behaviour, by strengthening or relaxing general rules of interaction based on sex and age. For example, unmarried people of the opposite sex are expected to avoid each other (or to be seen to avoid each other) as much as possible. This rule is perhaps a little less strict for closely related boys and girls (although the practice of young men's living in prayer houses or elsewhere outside the parental home is often explained as being due to shyness about co-residence with female relatives).

Similarly one is expected to show great deference and respect to people older than oneself, whatever one's feelings. This respect is especially demanded by older lineage-mates, even in their absence, as the following case shows:

Akmal is a young man of about 20 years old. He is not hesitant with me about revealing his frank opinion of older men in the village if he dislikes or disapproves of them, although he is always respectful when he meets them. One day a group of us were discussing his mother's brother, a man of about 50 who had been involved in a number of doubtful ventures, and was generally considered to be unreliable. Indeed many people openly gossiped about him when he was not around. While I felt that Akmal clearly had similar feelings about his uncle, he never discussed them with me. I was told by a neighbour of Akmal's that he would be embarrassed even to overhear something derogatory about his mother's brother.

Lineage solidarity is stronger among women, perhaps because the female domestic and interactional group is more strongly based on matrilineal ties. Men, who live uxorilocally, are expected to visit the "parental" home (i.e. the home of their sisters and sisters' children) at regular intervals, and to give advice when necessary on lineage matters. By and large, however, the domestic sphere (as well as that concerned with subsistence agriculture, see below) is controlled by female kin.

The suku are also to some extent ceremonially corporate in that at weddings and at panghulu ceremonies they are meant to act as a group. If one of their members is married, they are all expected to attend, and indeed expect to be expressly invited to all wedding ceremonies. If their relation were only as neighbours or friends they would be expected to go only to the main ceremony held in the home of the bride or groom. Similar, although less well-attended ceremonies are held after death, when there are several evenings of Koran reading and group prayers (basalawaik). Here also lineage mates are expected to attend, especially for the first night of the readings.

A basic feature of all such ceremonies is that at least one meal is eaten by the guests in the house in which the ceremony is being held.
However, although I have mentioned the importance of suku ties in these ceremonies, other people are always present. Since all guests enter the house, eat a meal and usually leave quickly, it is rare that large numbers of guests sit around together for any period of time. When they do, as for example during the ritualised speechmaking at weddings and panghulu-installations (sambah-manyambah) only rarely is the lineage tie stressed to exclude non-lineage mates. In fact many people at weddings informed me that the main function of the practice whereby six people eat together from a single plate (makan bajambah) was to allow people of different groups to get to know each other. Having looked briefly at the present-day folk model of matrilineal kinship in a Minangkabau nagari we must now turn to an analysis of the relationship between matrilineal kinship and property relations.

**Kinship and land tenure:**

The most important land in Sungai Puar is classified as harto pusako (ancestral property). Villagers maintain that communal land ownership acts to prevent the disintegration of Minangkabau adat by preventing the exclusion of large numbers of people from their heritage (pusako). This conception is slightly misleading for two reasons. First, relatively large numbers of Sungai Puar families are completely without access to irrigated rice land. Second, to say that kin groups own land is to oversimplify. Rather ownership must be viewed as culturally-specific, a product of a set of social relations and thus a manifestation of varying rights with respect to any piece of land (cf. Malinowski, 1935; Gluckman, 1941, 1943 and 1965; and Firth, 1965).

In one sense sawah pusako (ancestral rice land) is individually owned. In another sense it is owned by the suku as a group. I shall discuss individual rights of possession before turning below to the phenomenon of communal ownership.

In Sungai Puar individuals have exclusive rights to the produce of pusako land. Elsewhere, as in Bungus, the individuals have no such exclusive right, but must give a share to the elders of the matrilineage. Even in Sungai Puar some panghulu retain a plot of rice land as suku chiefs. This land is known as sawah panggadangan gala. In Sungai Puar individual access to land also brings with it the power to transfer the land to one's legitimate (i.e. matrilineal) heir, and the rights to sell or pledge land to other villagers (although rights of alienation are limited by rules of group ownership).
Today land of this sort is largely possessed by women, while restrictions on land transference may be exercised by senior men or the panghulu. The day to day management of rice land as well as rights to the harvest is in most cases exercised by women. Land is passed regularly from mother to daughter, either when the mother becomes too old to exercise her rights, or on her death. Generally land is divided equally among sisters after the death of their mother. Before the death of an older woman land tends to be owned communally by a matrilineal extended family, although it may be worked individually when plots are allocated among the members of a sibling group. In the case of shared land, the land is rarely worked cooperatively, but rather worked in rotation by each daughter in turn. In this case the system is known as sawah balega. There are some cases of this practice among matrilineal parallel cousins in different households. This is the result of joint ownership in a three generation matrilineal extended family. In these cases the land may be worked one year by one set of siblings, and the next year by a second set, although this practice is rare. If land has not been divided among siblings, it is usually divided in the next generation. Overall, however, these rights of possession are vested in individuals rather than in groups of female relatives.

When land comes to be pledged, or when land is divided on inheritance, men of the lineage appear to take part in the decision-making. A woman's brothers are said to help and advise her with regard to all problems of ancestral land or other suku property. In a few cases brothers actually cultivate the land themselves, although such cases are both rare and considered exceptional by villagers. It is considered legitimate only if there are no closely related women or none live in the village. But it must be remembered that when men own land they must never pass it on to their children.

Disputes arise in the case of male possession of land. There were several such cases being argued when I was in the village, when a woman's brother or her mother's brother were said to have "taken the land to his wife's house" (dibao ka rumah padusi). This means that he had taken control of the land, and was planning to pass it on to his children. If the legal heirs were financially able to do so, it is likely that they could take the case to the mayor, or to the court in nearby Bukit Tinggi and regain the land.

This does not mean, however, that a man has no rights in any sawah pusako. He exercises these rights both with respect to the pledging and selling of family land, and with respect to the cultivation of and produce
of his wife's land. He may also buy land in the village for building or for cultivation. In this case the property reverts to his wife's matrilineage after his death. Almost all immovable property bought by a man is inherited by his daughters. This practice gives rise to disputes between a man's own children who benefit from their father's purchase, and his sister's children who may claim that they should inherit (cf. Tanner, 1969).

The rights of a man in his wife's land are ill-defined, and they also vary from family to family. If a man is a farmer he may work his wife's land. In this case he simply shares in the rice harvest like any other family member, i.e. as a member of the unit of consumption. Since rice is planted in most cases only once a year, land may be planted with a vegetable crop, either for consumption or as a cash crop in the off season. A man has a strong claim to plant a cash crop on his wife's land.

But even if a man does not work his wife's land, he clearly benefits from it, since most of the crops grown are consumed by the elementary family of the owner. It is clearly to a man's advantage if he does not have to buy rice, the main staple food, but can use his money instead to finance cash-earning activities.

A man exercises no official control over his wife's land. He cannot pledge the land or sell it. Some women may even deny their husbands the right to a portion of the harvest if it is sold. The arrangements are informal. Clearly if a man has done a good deal of work on his wife's land, he is entitled to more of a say in its management than if he does not. According to older women in the village the husband has a good deal of power in his wife's house (although this is frequently disputed by Minangkabau men). Any business of the wife, women say, must be approved by her husband.

Before I turn to the problem of lineage ownership of land, a brief discussion of pledging is necessary. Land can be pledged (tagadai) to someone else in exchange for a loan. The pledger gives up the land in exchange for money, and on return or repayment the land can be reclaimed (ditabuih). In theory land can be pledged only for a few reasons set out by adai (cf. de Josselin de Jong, op. cit.: 56). It is now commonly agreed, however, that pledging can take place if the welfare of a particular family is involved. If for example a man runs out of cash for whatever reason, land can be pledged to feed his family. If a girl's kin have not saved up enough for her wedding, land can be pledged to pay for the ceremony. In all such cases land can act as a sort
of insurance. Those who have access to it can risk their money more freely, for they know they can always fall back on pledging to tide them over hard times. This holds for female members of the kin group, and their husbands who also benefit when their wives pledge land. In the case of a man's sister, or the land of his matrilineal family, pledging of land can benefit him more directly. In theory land cannot be pledged to use the cash so obtained for trade, or to finance a craft, but in fact there are many cases in Sungai Puar of this taking place.

A large amount of land belonging to the lineage of Datuak A was pledged in the early 1950's in order to provide capital for Bahar, who became a successful merchant in the Bukit Tinggi market. Unfortunately for his lineage-mates he went bankrupt in 1958 and the land was never reclaimed.

Young men try to persuade their mothers to pledge land to provide them with trading capital. Akmal told me that he frequently asked his mother to pledge her share of some jointly-owned rice land so that he could set up as a trader. He did not, however, meet with any success. A few similar cases could be cited, and it is clear that there are others which I did not hear about. Since this is officially not in accordance with adat, people are either reluctant to discuss the matter or, in many cases they deny that such a thing has happened.

So far I have discussed what I have called rights of possession — by which I mean the more direct aspect of the property relation. I have tried to show that in general individual women possess irrigated rice land in Sungai Puar, i.e. direct appropriation of the land is in their hands. In another sense, however, I have pointed out that rice land is owned by the suku as a group. Such communal ownership is vested in the lineage in Sungai Puar. Suku ownership can be seen best as a set of restrictions placed on the alienation of land, as well as the existence of residual rights held in suku land on the basis of the kinship bond. In Sungai Puar these communal rights act to prevent land from passing into the hands of non-villagers. They also make it difficult for a rightful heir to be denied inheritance if he or she is willing and able to defend that right when a potential inheritance is about to be transferred to someone else. The other rules act to limit the transfer of land outside the lineage group, and to some extent outside the clan, but by no means completely rule this out.

The clearest manifestation of lineage ownership is seen when an individual dies without heirs — in other words when a descent line dies out (punah). In these cases land is reallocated within the lineage...
group. As the following case shows, this rule in practice is not so straightforward:

Jusniar is one of the largest land holders in the village, due to the depopulation of her lineage segment. Her land is all worked by sharecroppers — and she receives a proportion of the total harvest. She is not the only person to benefit from this wealth. A proportion of the harvest is claimed each year by her three classificatory brothers (MZS's). Because her MZ died without a daughter, she and her daughter are the only rightful heirs in the lineage. Because of the process of concentration, however, her male cousins are justified in claiming a proportion of the harvest. It is said, moreover, that when Jusniar dies the land will be reallocated to members of closely related lineage segments. Jusniar has staved off attempts to do this so far by force of personality alone.

The transfer of land is also, in theory, restricted by the lineage group. In practice today this means that if an individual wishes to pledge or sell land she must first get the permission of all her lineage-mates. What usually seems to happen is that the land is offered first to each member of the lineage in turn. If nobody within the lineage is prepared to buy, the land is then offered to members of the clan, and only then to other villagers. The bill of sale must carry the signature of the panghulu, who is thus given the power to block any sale.

Because of some genealogical confusion within the lineage, and because some people leave the village for long periods of time, there may be frequent disputes over land which are very difficult to settle. It often happens that returning migrants claim land. If they are able, through tortuous genealogical reasoning to establish a claim, they may in this way be able to receive rights of possession which are in effect granted in faith, on the basis of the kinship bond. Close relatives then may be required by the panghulu to give up a proportion of their holdings to accommodate the newcomers.

These then are some manifestations of communal land ownership in Sungai Puar. Alienation of land must in theory take place only with the consent of the lineage as a group. Land may be reallocated within the lineage by the panghulu if a branch of the family dies out. Finally common lineage membership is sometimes taken to signify residual rights in lineage land.

In this necessarily brief discussion of matrilineal organisation in a single Minangkabau village I have described some aspects of the local folk model as well as the role of adat in the organisation of the social relations of production in the subsistence sector of the economy. In order to evaluate the extent of the breakdown of the "traditional" system, it will be necessary to describe the way this system differs from
that described for earlier periods of Minangkabau history. Before this can be done, however, it is important to describe briefly other aspects of present-day village social structure, in order that the reader can understand the degree to which the matrilineal structures just described are dominated by other principles of social and cultural organisation.

**Political and Economic Organisation in Sungai Puar:**

The nagari of Sungai Puar is in some ways a good test case for the decline of matriline in West Sumatra because it is more closely involved economically in the national and world economy than other Minangkabau villages. To analyse the causes for this would take more space than I have here, but the effects of this demonstrate this point. For example, while the ratio of hectares of *sawah* (irrigated rice land) per capita for the province of West Sumatra overall is .098 (including urban areas), and for the district of Agam (in which Sungai Puar is located) is .115, the ratio for the section of Sungai Puar for which I collected data was .028 (data for West Sumatra and Agam calculated from data given in Kantor Sensus dan Statistik Sumatera Barat, 1970). This means that subsistence agriculture on ancestral land forms a relatively small part of the total village economy. I have calculated (Kahn, 1974a) that subsistence cultivation of rice on this land would produce about 20% of the village’s total rice needs. Hence even in order to obtain sufficient rice for their annual consumption (not to mention other goods for which cash is needed) Sungai Puar villagers must pursue occupations from which they can earn a money income. In the village section of Limo Suku (population in 1970: 3376) the main forms of earning this necessary cash income are: blacksmithing, sewing (for women), carpentry and other crafts and petty trade. In other parts of West Sumatra villagers rely either on other crafts, in particular weaving, or more often on the production of cash crops for the local, regional, national and international markets. The result is a national and international division of labour which affects every village in the province. Sungai Puar, because of its greater needs for cash income is perhaps more affected in this way than most villages. Table 1, based on a sample of resident working men, gives an indication of the degree to which the occupational structure of the village is a product of

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3 Sungai Puar is like many other highland Minangkabau nagari in that there is a large group of people still considered as nagari members who migrate, mostly to the towns and cities of West Sumatra and to other parts of Indonesia. In this discussion I refer only to people resident in the village during the period of my fieldwork.
economic forces outside it. The organisation of the village commodity economy, as well as the organisation of the primarily trading activities of migrants is not directly affected by matrilineal adat. Property relations in this sector are quite different, based on the concept of a different type of ownership called harto pancarian or earned property.

Therefore in economic terms matrilineal organisation is dominated by other forms of organisation.

If the nagari is not an economically autonomous unit, neither is it politically independent. Political relations entirely outside the sphere of matrilineal organisation also dominate the local political structure. The administration of the nagari today is the result of the incorporation of these villages as the lowest level in the hierarchy of territorial and administrative organisation of the Indonesian state. As far as the government outside the nagari is concerned, it is administered by the mayor (wali nagari) and the village council (DPRN). The DPRN is elected within the nagari, and it in turn elects the mayor. The mayor is, in theory, an independent village official. There is no doubt, however, that during the period of my research the mayor was subject to the will of higher officials on important issues. During the electoral campaign the Sungai Puar mayor was removed by the Bupati for a variety of reasons.

While according to the ideal the nagari is governed by its panghulu who sit together at the balai adat, the political power of the panghulu has declined considerably. In a large number of cases disputes traditionally settled by the panghulu are now heard in courts outside the village altogether.

The degree to which the lines of political cleavage are drawn entirely outside the sphere of matrilineal organisation is evident in the nature of the last major political rebellions in the province, the PRRI regional uprisings of 1958. Here the issues revolved around the political dominance of the Jakarta government, and had little to do with the political authority of the panghulu (cf. Kahn, 1974a: Chapter 10; Alliband, 1970).

These new relations have not left the “adat sector” untouched. In some areas of West Sumatra, for example, rice produced on ancestral land is sold as a commodity in the market. Even in Sungai Puar new forms of wage labour and tenancy are used in the cultivation of ancestral rice land. Ancestral land itself is bought and sold, in spite of restrictions on alienation of land exercised both by the panghulu and the lineage as a whole. Far from retaining their traditional authority,
the panghulu themselves fulfil new administrative functions such as assistance with the collection of taxes for the local government.

A final manifestation of this change is found in the sphere of marriage arrangements. While I do not intend to enter into a discussion of the relative importance of cross cousin marriage in Minangkabau in the past (cf. de Josselin de Jong, op. cit.: Chapter 5), it is certainly of minor importance today. Of the 838 marriages recorded in my sample census, 43 were marriages of men to their matrilateral cross cousins (MBD married to FZS). In addition there were ten marriages between MBS and FZD. The villagers say that a woman who has married her FZS has "pulang ka rumah bako", i.e. she has returned to the home of her father's kin. This frequently means that the woman has married a close patrilateral cross cousin, i.e. one either from her father's parental home or from his housing cluster. Included in this category, however, are cross cousin marriages between a woman and a classificatory patrilateral cross cousin, i.e. a cousin in the father's lineage. The survival of terminological evidence of circulating connubium in Minangkabau seems to me to stem from an ancient tribal system in operation before the rise of the Minangkabau State in the 14th century.

Finally, while the nature of domestic groups does not necessarily shed light on the relative importance of matrilineal organisation, the average size of the residential group in my census was just over 6 persons. The large majority of these domestic groups were elementary families, or single women with children. Very few were matrilineal extended family households, and even in these cases the elementary family formed an autonomous unit of consumption.

These facts — the declining importance of subsistence agricultural and hence of suku control over property; the squeezing out of the panghulu; and the emergence of the elementary family vis-à-vis the matrilineal kin groups — can can all be taken to be signs of the decline of matriliney in West Sumatra. Maretin, in an interesting discussion of 20th century changes in Minangkabau society (Maretin, 1961) takes as the main features of traditional Minangkabau: the importance of matrilineal extended families, inheritance in the female line, the important role of the mother's brother, clan exogamy; communal organisation and the like (168 f). The main thrust of his argument is to demonstrate the decline of these features in the 20th century. The value of Maretin's contribution is obvious, i.e. it does much to undermine the previous view that the Minangkabau have preserved "almost to the present day a kind of idyllic matriarchate" (ibid: 169). The earlier
studies by Schrieke (1955) allow us to draw similar conclusions.

Studies of changes in matrilineal organisation in Minangkabau by Maretin, Schrieke and Gough (op. cit.) as well as more general overviews of the breakdown of matriliney in the 20th century (cf. Schneider and Gough, op. cit.), all exhibit one grave weakness, i.e. they are often based on a false historical baseline. In other words these studies approach social change of this type in an oversimplified and misleading way. Maretin, for example, limits his study to changes set in motion “towards the beginning of the 20th century, i.e. the time of radical changes in the traditional way of life.” (op. cit.: 173). Schrieke, too, attributes the dissolution of matriliney to the expansion of commercial development in the early years of this century. The general picture which emerges from these studies is that prior to 1900 Minangkabau was a society of traditional matrilineal form, and that only under pressures of the 20th century life did these forms disintegrate.

What Schrieke, Gough and Maretin have failed to understand is that there is no such thing as “traditional Minangkabau society”. Even if we were to limit ourselves to the last 300 years, we should see that mercantile and later colonial domination by Europeans left a mark on social structure in West Sumatra. The concept of “traditional matrilineal organisation” is therefore extremely unsatisfactory. Firstly, it suggests a timeless system, while Minangkabau society has undergone a series of historical transformations which demand that any historical reconstruction be anchored in a specific historical period (cf. de Josselin de Jong, op. cit.: 115). Secondly it smacks of the ideology of the “golden age”, an idealisation which is part of present-day Minangkabau ideology. Finally it implies that there is a smooth transition from tradition to modernity, which is stimulated by the forces of neo-colonialism.

In spite of the scholarly and painstaking work of de Josselin de Jong, a consistent picture of pre-colonial structure in Minangkabau has largely failed to emerge. The research upon which most speculation about traditional Minangkabau is based was done after the establishment of colonial rule. For this reason I would here like to put forward two hypotheses which bear on the problem of change in the matrilineal kinship structures in Minangkabau. These hypotheses, which have quite devastating implications for the whole idea of traditional Minangkabau society are surprisingly simple, and seem so obvious that it is surprising that they have not been put forward elsewhere. The hypotheses are first: that the picture of “traditional Minangkabau society” implicit in most writings concerned with the decline of matriliney in West Sumatra is
in many ways accurate with one exception — that the picture presented
is in fact of Minangkabau society as it was under the system of forced
cultivation imposed by the colonial government in the 19th century.
Second I suggest that the role of adat in economic and political organi-
sation extant in that period was a direct result of the imposition of
colonial rule through officials such as the panghulu and the so-called
laras or lareh, of whom more below. In other words the unique political
position of these officials, which stemmed from their role in the admini-
stration of colonial rule was the result of their class position, rigidified
by colonial rule.

I have said that these hypotheses are obvious, because it seems much
safer to assume that information gathered during the colonial period
reflected the specificities of that period rather than those of any
historical period before it. Perhaps they have not been considered
simply because many scholars have up until now accepted the colonial
ideology of dualism which attempted to put across the premise that
colonial rule was simply imposed on top of, and hardly affected the
pre-colonial social formations. While concepts of dualism of this sort have
been frequently criticised (cf. Geertz, 1963: 53 f), the main implication
of these criticisms, i.e. that “traditional” Indonesian society was in fact
a product of the colonial situation, has not been drawn out.

I do not here have the space to demonstrate the truth of my
hypotheses to my own satisfaction. Indeed the paucity of good data on
pre-colonial Minangkabau society makes such a proof unlikely. What
I will try to show in the next section of the article is that the Culture
System had the effect of solidifying matrilineal structures, and that it
in fact relied on this. The result was a form of social organisation which
differed considerably both from Minangkabau society before the coming
of the Europeans, and the social formation which arose during the
pre-colonial period of mercantile exploitation.

II. THE CULTURE SYSTEM AND MATRILINEAL STRUCTURES:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “TRADITIONAL” SYSTEM

Early Portuguese, Dutch and English interest in the East Indies was
concentrated on the spice trade. In the 17th century a series of contracts
with local rulers gave the English, and more importantly Dutch traders
a monopoly over the trade in spices and gold on Sumatra’s West coast
(cf. Kroeskamp, 1931; Leeuw, 1926). By the 18th century British
holdings on the West coast of Sumatra also achieved a degree of
prominence, culminating in the Raffles’ administration centred on Fort
Marlborough (near Bencoolen) in the early 19th century. Mercantile exploitation, however, met with some difficulties, and after the departure of the British in 1824 Dutch policy underwent some changes. Exploitation of the East Indies, formerly carried out first by individual merchants, and then by the Dutch East India Company, passed into the hands of a colonial government; interest shifted from the spice trade to the cultivation of sugar in Java and coffee in Sumatra; and the colonial government gradually moved to control the process of production itself. It is from this period, then, that we can speak of the rise of colonialism in West Sumatra.

Coffee, which was originally brought to the East Indies as a trade good from Arabia, was planted in Java in the early 18th century. The first exports went from Java to Amsterdam in 1712 (cf. Parels, 1944). As early as 1820 coffee was being exported from the West coast of Sumatra. In that year 17,000 piculs were exported, mainly to the United States. By 1826 there were exports to the Netherlands of 40,000 piculs and by 1833 the total had reached 60,000 piculs. The coffee was sold directly to the government at fixed, and indeed very low prices, or more frequently exchanged for trade goods (cf. Ples, 1878). Warehouses were built in Padang Panjang and Payakumbuh where coffee could be sold and trade goods obtained (Graves, 1971).

The outbreak of the Padri Wars, a reaction to the earlier foreign trade monopolies, had two effects on the situation. On the one hand the political turbulence had a deleterious effect on coffee production, while on the other the Dutch intervention allowed them to establish their footholds in the highlands, through the two forts: Fort van der Capellan (now Batu Sangkar) and Fort de Kock (now Bukit Tinggi). The desire of the colonial government to increase coffee production was evident. At the request of the Governor General van den Bosch a commissioner was sent to Sumatra too look into the deterioration in coffee production, and some measures were taken to restore production. In spite of informal pressures, however, production declined from 100,000 piculs in 1843 to 58,000 piculs in 1847.

A law was passed in September, 1847, bringing the system of forced cultivation (dwangstelsel) to West Sumatra, which became one of the few places outside Java to experience colonial exploitation in this form. In effect the Culture System brought with it colonial ownership of all productive land, although this new system of property relations did not receive legal recognition until slightly later (cf. Kat Angelino, 1931). In terms of the basic economic relations, then, colonial exploitation in
Java did not differ significantly from that in Sumatra. The differences were in the forms of cooperation employed in sugar as opposed to coffee cultivation (cf. Geertz, 1963). Coffee cultivation in West Sumatra was carried out by individuals, who then sold the coffee to the government at an artificially depressed price. It is important to note, however, that just as in Java colonial exploitation required a direct involvement by the colonial class in the relations of production.

Under the new law in West Sumatra it was up to local officials, such as the Tuanku Laras, in cooperation with the panghulu to see that every able-bodied man with access to land cultivated a certain number of trees. The cooperation of these officials was secured by granting them a percentage of the revenues from coffee grown in their areas. Small warehouses were built in every market town, and the price of transport was borne by the producer. Small changes were made to make the system more efficient. In 1862 cultivation was made legally compulsory (showing how, just as with colonial land ownership, legal recognition followed the changes in the economic base of the system); and in 1879 the percentage allowed to the local officials increased (Huitema, 1935: 59).

The operation of the system clearly could not be uniform, because of ecological variation. Since bushes were best planted on unterraced hillsides, some villages proved more favourable sites than others. Difficulties also arose concerning those who either lived outside their home village, or performed other jobs such as trading. An attempt was made in 1892 to make up for this by instituting a land tax which meant that those not cultivating coffee paid the government the equal of one share of the coffee profit (Huitema, ibid.: 53 f). Additional variation was the result of the fact that the laws on forced cultivation were systematically applied only in the district known as the Padangsche Bovenlanden. Districts in the south, some of which were more suitable to coffee cultivation, largely escaped the effects of the Culture System.

For various reasons the Culture System was abandoned in most parts of the East Indies by the end of the 19th century (cf. Wertheim, 1956: 61 f). In 1908 the system was replaced by an income tax in West Sumatra. Before I discuss the implications of the free development of commodity production in West Sumatra for matrilineal organisation, I shall look briefly at the institutional apparatus required for the Culture System in West Sumatra. This means looking first at the colonial policy on rice cultivation, and then at the political and legal framework of the Culture System.
It was the policy of the colonial government in this period to maintain the isolation of village communities and hence to preserve the illusion of the autonomy of the *nagari* in West Sumatra. From the political point of view the aim was to prevent changes that might lead to political turbulence such as the growth of a rural proletariat. Schrieke writes that the effect of the government policy was to impede the development of an exchange policy "to maintain law and order" (Schrieke, 1955:97). Economic policy also aimed at preventing the penetration of external economic influence through imports. A developed commodity sector would have meant a demand for imports, and the Dutch were worried about the effects of this on local conditions, as well as their own position in the world economy. According to Geertz there was a fear that imports from other Western countries, in particular Great Britain, would undermine their position in the East Indies (Geertz, 1963:48). The policy with regard to rice cultivation can be understood in this light.

In Java the combination of sugar growing and the cultivation of rice was intended to preserve a separate subsistence sphere. Because sugar was grown on village lands, because lands were set aside for subsistence cultivation by the peasants who provided labour on the sugar fields, and because labour was needed only at certain times of the year, a land holding peasantry could be forced to work on the plantations while still retaining a relatively complete, although altered involvement in subsistence production. This brought the added advantage of relatively cheap or even free labour, because the labourers were able to derive their subsistence needs outside the plantation economy. We have here a form of feudalism (modified by communal possession) by which surplus is extracted directly as labour expended on land held by non-peasants who reproduce their own labour power on separate subsistence plots.

The system was not so neat in the case of coffee cultivation, because the coffee was grown individually and sold at a monopoly price. Nonetheless, while ownership of village land passed to the colonial government, direct appropriation rights remained with the local community or kingroup. Efforts were made to preserve the subsistence economy through encouraging rice growing on the one hand and banning its export on the other. The low level of development of commodity production in any case meant that most villagers had to grow rice in order to eat. The aim of the rice policy was to preserve the subsistence sector by preventing shortages, and by preventing rice becoming a
commodity, which might upset the delicate subsistence balance. To quote Schrieke:

"Care had to be taken to see that in every nagari as much paddy as possible was stored and as little as possible exported and sold. For a population amply supplied with food meant a contented and peaceful population. A former Padang High-
lands commissioner ('resident') was even of the opinion that the kinchirs, those ingenious native rice hulling milis driven by a water wheel, were harmful, since they made it easy for the paddy to be processed into granular rice, for which the export demand was greatest." (Schrieke, 1955: 197 f.)

Through the rice policy and the forced cultivation of coffee the colonial government aimed to extract a surplus from the West Sumatran nagari on the one hand, while at the same time preventing the development of a commodity economy on the other. The intention was to prevent political resistance to colonialism; to obtain coffee for export at very low prices; and to prevent the development of any local demand for imports which could more cheaply be met not by the Dutch economy at all, but by the British. Dualism was then part of the policy of the Culture System. In order to see how the policy of dualism, resting on this economic base, created many of the characteristics of what we have seen represented as the "traditional" Minangkabau system by Maretin and others we must look very briefly at the framework through which this policy was administered. This in itself would mean an exhaustive historical study. Therefore the material presented below must be thought of as an attempt to provoke discussion rather than the final word on the effects of the Culture System.

Administration in West Sumatra in the 19th Century:

When the Dutch attempted to set up an administrative structure for the Minangkabau nagari both during and after the Padri Wars, they were faced with a variety of local systems of government, which arose in the centuries after the decline of the Minangkabau Kingdom. In some cases nagari were governed by all their panghulu who sat in the so-called balai adat or village council. In others each village-level clan was represented by a single panghulu (sometimes called the panghulu pucuak) who stood above the others. In other nagari there was only one panghulu for each clan. Finally, more centralised forms of government had also arisen, bolstered up in the coastal areas by contracts made with the East India Company in the 17th century (cf. Kroeskamp, op. cit.). Probably for the sake of uniformity, however, the Dutch created three "native" officials, whose duty it was to carry out the
policy of the colonial government: the Tuanku Laras (Lareh), the Nagarihoofd (or Panghulu Kapalo), and the Panghulu Suku Rodi (cf. Westenenk, 1912-1913: 68 ff). The first two officials were heads of particular territorial units — the Nagarihoofd being the village headman; and the Tuanku Laras headed the district, a territorial unit created by the colonial administration consisting of several nagari. The main duties of these officials were: to carry out all government directives which affected their territories; to police their districts and ensure law and order; and to oversee both the coffee and rice cultivation in their areas of jurisdiction. It was particularly the task of the hated panghulu suku rodi to enforce the system of coffee cultivation imposed on the villagers in the Culture System. These officials were paid directly by the administration and/or they received a share of the proceeds from coffee sales in their areas. This latter system increased their motivation to enforce the laws concerned with the cultivation of coffee.

It is assumed by some writers that this imposed system of government had a deleterious effect on the position of the panghulu (Abdullah, 1971: 6 f). This, according to the theory, had two causes. First by making certain adat officials into tools of the colonial government they lost prestige among fellow villagers. Secondly it is thought that the authority of those panghulu who were not given government positions was undermined. The first of these assumptions seems to have been largely true. However, there is little or no evidence to support the second claim because the role of the panghulu and the balai adat is rarely mentioned in the sources.

There are numerous indications that the position of the panghulu cannot be understood simply in terms of a reduction in their traditional authority. On the one hand it was the position of the administration to leave room for these officials. On the other there is evidence to suggest that the panghulu along with other influential men of the matrilineages (the mamak) carved out a special role for themselves within the system.

The policy of the government that allowed the panghulu to play a role was related to the overall policy of dualism. In his report of 1827, for example, Governor De Steurs wrote about the respective roles of government-appointed and local officials in the following way:

"Domestic matters should be left to the panghulus to settle according to previous adat regulations. The Government officials should be concerned only with general matters." (Quoted in Westenenk, 1912-1913: 685; author's translation.)

This suggests that pre-colonial forms of village organisation were to be
retained even if in altered and congealed form. Much of Minangkabau property and inheritance law was also preserved (cf. Willinck, 1909: 78). Even criminal law remained the province of these “traditional” leaders until the 1870’s (Abdullah, 1971: 6). Thus even if the creation of a new official hierarchy drastically changed the structure of *nagari* government, the old leaders were not completely dispossessed of all authority. Rather, it seems, they retained a role in the administration of *adat*, which now came to mean not the overall organisation of society, but the organisation of certain aspects of the dominated sector. This policy of dualism, which selects certain elements while turning them to its own ends was described by Michiels in 1842 when he argued that the colonial government did not seek to impose its laws on the Malays, but rather to attempt to administer their own laws in an orderly way (quoted in Westenenk, op. cit.: 691). Hence our first evidence on the role of the panghulu comes from the side of colonial policy.

There is, however, a second type of evidence, perhaps not as sound as the first, which suggests what the role of the *panghulu* might actually have been. Almost all our sources on Minangkabau, particularly those written in the colonial period, lay great stress on the duty of the *panghulu* and other notables to see that ancestral property, and rice land in particular, was fairly and equally distributed among their *kamanakan* (lit. sisters’ children; fig. suku-mates). While this is often cited as an aspect of the *panghulu*’s traditional role, for reasons which I shall discuss below, it seems that this role, or at least the successful performance of it was more important in the 19th century.

Willinck, for example, tells us that it was the duty of the guardian of *suku* property (for which read either *panghulu* or other senior male of the matrilineage) to see that usufruct rights in rice land were allocated to the correct segment and to see that those rights went to those most in need (Willinck, op. cit.: 598). It was the duty of this person, as well, to see that the old were not bypassed in favour of the young (ibid.: 600); that the *suku* holdings were increased by taking into cultivation new land if possible (ibid.: 607); that land was never sold outside the *suku* (ibid.: 608) except in certain specified circumstances; and even then to restrict land transfers of all sorts to closely related kin (ibid.: 617). Joustra also interprets the data in this way, saying that the *mamak* had the right to take away usufruct rights from those who had more than their fair share, and to re-distribute land to lineage members in need (Joustra, 1920: 130).

If we can assume that in the 19th century those *panghulu* who were
not part of the colonial administration were in most cases duty bound to ensure if not equal, then at least universal access to rice land, we can also see why these panghulu should also retain a degree of judicial power. The preservation of systems of property possession by the Dutch within the overall framework of colonial ownership gave the panghulu authority also to settle disputes over such property. This position was presumably at least tacitly enforced by the Nagarihoofd and the Laras.

This leads us to two final points on the role of the panghulu under the Culture System. First it should be pointed out that the role of administrator of property rights with respect to rice land which I have suggested was assigned to or retained by the panghulu and other adat leaders would have been directly in accord with the colonial policy on subsistence cultivation of rice. We have seen that the aim of this policy was to preserve a subsistence economy and to prevent the emergence of landless groups within the nagari. The government orders to store rice (cf. Schrieke, op. cit.) may have fallen not just on the Nagarihoofd, but also on these administrators of family property. Thus I think we can suggest that under the Culture System it was the function of the panghulu and the mamak to preserve the subsistence base of the majority of the population through administration of harto pusako. We can further suggest that because this was directly in accord with colonial policy, and because it was specifically stated that the “native” officials were responsible for government rice policy in their districts, that the panghulu were encouraged, if not positively backed up in this role.

The second point is that just as we cannot assume that the panghulu were made entirely powerless by the new system of administration, neither can we assume that the panghulu received no benefits. Apart from suggestions of corruption, it is highly likely that the panghulu were at least partly supported by the system. First we have the possibility that most panghulu, at least in the 19th century, had a piece of land set aside for their maintenance and worked by their kamanakan. Some of the older villagers in Sungai Puar confirm this as a distinct possibility. Second we have the possibility that grants of land were made by the panghulu to their kamanakan who worked them in turn for a share of the crop. This system is preserved in the coastal nagari of Bungus today. Most suku land is worked by younger members of the clan, who divide the harvest with their senior mamak. The contract, known as pasiduoan (lit. divide in half) is identical to that made between share-cropping tenants and landlords. Finally we have the various payments made to the panghulu, either by his own kamanakan or by others.
occupying suku land. These payments were called isi adat (cf. Willinck, op. cit.: 195, 314 ff; Westenenk, 1918: 66 ff).

It is now possible to see that the results of this policy could well have been the relatively static, segmentary system of clans and lineages with corporate land ownership often taken to be the hallmark of the “traditional” Minangkabau matrilineal system. Relevant here were the attempts by the colonial administration to fix the number of panghulu and hence prevent lineage segmentation, such as the introduction of the panghulu register by Governor de Munnick in 1888 (Schrieke, 1955: 135).

Before we can return to the problem of social change which followed the lifting of forced cultivation and the evolution of free peasant commodity production in this century, an important point must be made. I have suggested that the conception held by many students of Minangkabau adat of a traditional Minangkabau system is in all likelihood derived from the period of colonial administration known as the Culture System in the 19th century. I have also implied that Minangkabau society before this imposition of colonial rule was quite different altogether and that it would be therefore quite wrong to equate “traditional” Minangkabau organisation with anything that existed in West Sumatra before the coming of colonial rule. The tendency in the literature to equate the two probably arises from two sources: first the colonial ideology of dualism which conceived of a largely untouched traditional sector, unaffected by colonial exploitation; and second a present-day Minangkabau ideology about the past.

It is not my intention here to reconstruct pre-colonial Minangkabau society in order to demonstrate this point, both because I think that the logic of the above argument is sufficient to strongly suggest this as a possibility and because I plan to do so in another article currently under preparation. However we have in the sources a number of clues which make it possible to assume that Minangkabau society before the Padri Wars differed in some important respects from the economic and political organisations described above.

To look first at the economic autonomy of the nagari, and the strength of the subsistence economy, which we have seen is a strong feature of 19th century Minangkabau: we have a good deal of evidence that the situation was quite different in the past. The numerous regulations in adat concerning the way traders could move about the Minangkabau heartland by attaching themselves to localised kin groups suggests that trade was not an unimportant aspect of economic organi-
sation before the 19th century (cf. Willinck, op. cit.: 1477 ff, 644). We know also of the widespread distribution of foreign trade articles in Sumatra, as well as the existence of overseas trade carried on in products from the Sumatran interior (cf. van Leur, 1967: chapter 3). This trade network clearly preceded the era of European mercantile domination of the coastal commerce that arose in the 17th century. We also have evidence that under the Minangkabau kingdom some of the tribute received by the king consisted of goods crafted from gold and other metals produced in the Minangkabau interior (Graves, 1971: 877), and that there was even trade and tribute in rice (Graves, ibid.; van Leur, op. cit.). Marsden’s *History of Sumatra* (1811) refers to the existence of iron smelting and working in the highlands in the 18th century; Bickmore, a traveller in the middle of the 19th century also mentions smelting and forging in the area around Mount Merapi (Bickmore, 1869: 472). Finally the existence of territorially concentrated craft specialisation in Minangkabau today suggests the existence of a complex division of labour in the past.

This is linked to other aspects of pre-colonial Minangkabau society. We know that *adat* contains provisions for the creation of new kin groups, and indeed new *nagari* through segmentation (Willinck, op. cit.: 110). This suggests that lineage segments and village sections split away in order to gain access to land. This possibility, which contradicts the ideal of equality of access to land is further supported by the existence, at least in some areas, of caste-like divisions within *nagari*. Whole groups of people, often called *kamanakan dibawah lutuik* were excluded both from land ownership and from a place in the local political structure (for a discussion of the persistence of some of these differentials today cf. Umar Junus, 1964; Bachtiar, 1967). Marriage rules prevented women from marrying into these lower ranking lineages (cf. Willinck, op. cit.: 455). It is suggested that incoming groups such as these may have worked as tenants on the land of the original settlers of a village, who were then reproduced through this class relationship. Moreover there are indications that slavery was an important feature of the economy at some periods in time.

Finally it seems that, as least before its eclipse in the early 16th century, the patrilineal royal line had more than a simple ideological role. I have already noted the payment of tribute. Willinck mentions the existence of tracts of land between *nagari* called *tanah rajo* or royal land. These pieces of land may have been worked for the king during periods of centralisation and expansion of the whole system, periods
which may have coincided with increases in slavery and in lineage ranking. There is considerable evidence of the royal monopoly on gold (cf. de Haan, 1897; Marsden, 1811), as well as royal domination of the commercial sector through the levying of the so-called *oupatti* (cf. Kroeskamp, op. cit.).

It is also interesting to speculate about the possible function of lineage ranking created by or expressed through alliances cemented by cross cousin marriage. This might have been a survival of the period of tribal organisation, before the rise of the Minangkabau kingdom in the 14th century. Certainly there were periods when the centralised power of the royal lineage expanded outside the heartland to exercise some control over outlying districts. Combined with the fact that Minangkabau princes were sent to Negeri Sembilan to become rulers on the Malay peninsula itself (de Josselin de Jong, op. cit.), this historical material suggests the utmost importance of research into the expansion and contraction of centralised power in the West Sumatran highlands, before any general model of traditional Minangkabau can be presented.

While a good deal of work remains to be done on pre-colonial Minangkabau society, the bits and pieces of evidence cited here further strengthen my argument that the segmentary, egalitarian and subsistence-oriented society often described is much more likely to apply to the colonial period than to anything which preceded it.

III. Conclusions: SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE “DECLINE” OF MATRILINY IN MINANGKABAU

I have argued in this article that an evaluation of the changing role of matrilineal organisation in Minangkabau depends upon a proper periodisation of Minangkabau history. Changes which took place in the 20th century must be analysed, not with respect to a timeless “traditional” system, but rather with respect to the role of matrilineal organisation within the colonial social formation. The changes cited by Schrieke, Gough and Maretin refer primarily to the declining importance of matrilineal kinship as a principle of economic and political organisation. This has gone hand in hand with a decline in the position of the *panghulu*, i.e. a reorientation of the class relationships which existed in 19th century West Sumatra.

The event which marked the emergence of the new social formation was not Indonesian political independence. Rather the abolition of forced cultivation, which did not take place in Minangkabau until 1908, and the gradual decline of colonial ownership of land must be seen as
the first steps in a series of changes that had far-reaching implications for the system of economic and political organisation which we have described for the 19th century. In 1908 the colonial administration abandoned the forced cultivation of coffee and instituted a tax to take its place. The removal of restrictions on rice cultivation in 1912 contributed towards the new tendency, an emergence of free commodity production in many areas of West Sumatra. First rice came to be produced as a commodity. The lifting of restrictions also meant that in certain areas people were free to abandon subsistence cultivation in part or altogether in order to take advantage of the rising prices of export crops that followed the abandonment of government set monopoly prices. Changes in the supply of, and increase in the price of rice meant that areas of land shortage underwent economic difficulties. This made for higher rates of migration. In areas where land was more plentiful, people benefited from the boom in cultivation of export crops both because they were freed from the duty to cultivate rice, and because the market in subsistence goods allowed for the emergence of a labour force.

The second main change was in the commodity sector of the economy. The areas lying outside the Minangkabau heartland were best able to take advantage of these conditions, and it was here that the growth of the commodity economy was strongest (cf. Schrieke, op. cit.: 99 ff). Rice production in these areas declined, while the production of coffee, rubber and coconuts increased. While I do not have space to demonstrate it here, the commodity sector in this period began to take its modern form, i.e. the emergence of small-scale units of production either individually owned and worked, or with the use of some wage labour. While large-scale production failed to emerge, nonetheless the free market stimulated the growth of the money economy (cf. Kahn, 1974a: 292 ff). This was combined with a decline in subsistence rice cultivation, although, as we have seen, even in areas with a highly developed commodity sector such as Sungai Puar, subsistence cultivation did not entirely disappear. For this reason although commodity prices rose, they still remained relatively depressed. Competition forced people to sell commodities at a lower price because of the general access to subsistence cultivation.

These changes in the economic base were related to a change in the balance of social forces in the province. The new groups of merchants and entrepreneurs, who benefited from the growth of the money economy, successfully won the battle against the old elite, the panghulu and other civil servants. It is in this light that the so-called Kaum...
Muda-Kaum Tua conflicts must be understood (Abdullah, 1971). The Kaum Muda represented the aspirations of the new entrepreneurial groups. At least in West Sumatra the period from the beginning of the 20th century up to independence was marked by a gradual increase in power on the part of the Kaum Muda and Muslim modernist groups at the expense of those groups that had most benefited from the policy of the Culture System. While the colonial administration varied in its response to these new forces, it also contributed to the decline of the traditional elites (cf. Schrieke, op. cit.: 135 ff). The revolution was only the culmination of this struggle on the part of the entrepreneurial class, in alliance with landless peasants and others who stood to benefit in the short run from unfettered commercial development.

While some power was retained by these traditional groups after independence, by and large the new Indonesian State built up its local administrative structure on the wreckage of the colonial system which had ruled through conservative forces who derived their position from the strength of the subsistence economy. The major conflicts since Independence have been no longer conflicts between the commercial classes and the traditional elites so much as conflicts between those groups which favour an entirely domestic capitalist economy against those who favour the close integration of the Indonesian economy into that of the world through foreign investment, loans and international aid.

While this discussion has of necessity been schematic, it shows that the relative importance of matrilineal organisation and its champions, the panghulu, in the post-Independence period can be understood only in the light of these overall changes in the social balance of forces in West Sumatra. The fact that truly capitalist development of the rural economy has failed to take place, in part a result of the present national domination by that class which seeks closer integration into the world economy by encouraging foreign capitalism, has resulted in the persistence of a subsistence sector of the economy. The persistence of subsistence rice cultivation in the West Sumatran nagari leaves room for the persistence of matrilineal clans and lineages. Their place in the present-day structure of nagari relations is preserved, although in a form which has been yet again altered and dominated by the commercial sector of the economy.

Elsewhere I have discussed in more detail the precise nature of the relationship between subsistence and commodity production in West Sumatra (see Kahn, 1974b).
We have thus resolved the paradox of change in the matrilineal organisation in West Sumatra in two ways. Firstly, by showing that the “traditional” system marked by the dominance of the panghulu and the corporate strength of matrilineal kin groups was a feature of 19th century colonial rule I have tried to demonstrate the link between the strength of matrilineal structures and the, artificial, preservation of a subsistence economy. Secondly, taking this period as the baseline, I have tried to show that the decline of matriliny was a direct result of the rise of commercial development. Looking at the relationship between subsistence and commercial production in post-Independence West Sumatra provides a clue regarding the persistence, in altered form, of matrilineal organisation in the Minangkabau nagari. This has led me to suggest that in the period before the imposition of colonial rule, matrilineal structures in the nagari may also have been dominated by other principles of organisation. For these reasons it is possible to conclude that what some students of Minangkabau take to be the “traditional” system was itself a product of external, colonial domination of the Minangkabau social formation.

**TABLE I**

*Occupations of working males resident in Limo Suku, Sungai Puar. 1971. (75% sample)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other craft</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver (bus, car, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>499</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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