



R. Waterson

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H. ROXANA WATERSON

## THE IDEOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY OF KINSHIP AMONG THE SA'DAN TORAJA

### *Introduction*

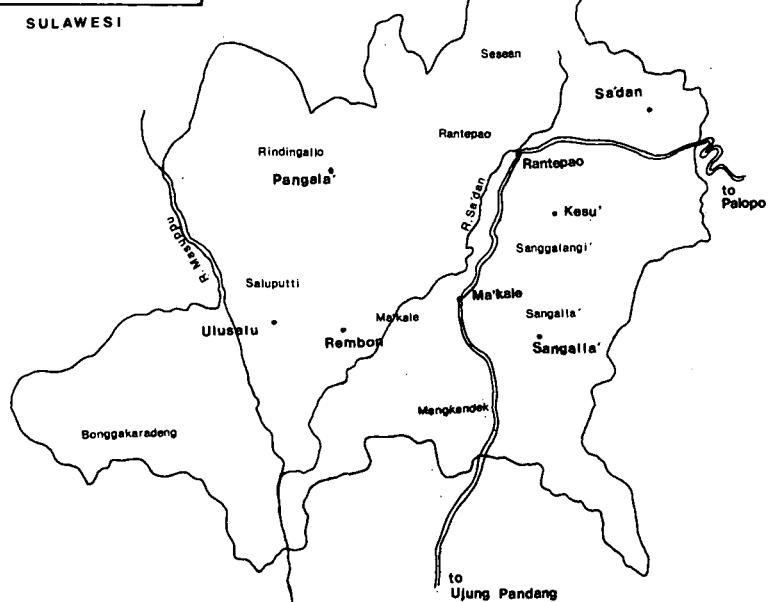
Looking at the cognatic kinship systems of South-East Asia, ethnographers have often been struck by their apparent "amorphousness" and by the deceptive simplicity of their kinship terminologies. Particularly in the 1950s, the writings of anthropologists such as Goodenough (1955) show an overriding concern to establish boundaries in the face of the unrestricted tracing of descent characteristic of bilateral systems, and to discern "descent groups", albeit non-unilineal, operating within the hazier grouping of the "kindred". Kinship studies in general in this period showed a major interest in descent and the construction of formal models of kinship terminologies. In this context, as Goodenough's title itself suggests, the formlessness of cognatic systems was viewed as problematic.

By contrast, more recent work differs radically in its concern with what Bourdieu has called "practical" as opposed to "official" kinship. Since it appears that a purely formal analysis of these systems is not adequate to describe them, the former approach has given way to a concern for the contextual analysis of the everyday use of kinship terms. As Bourdieu expresses it: "The logical relationships constructed by the anthropologist are opposed to 'practical' relationships – practical because continually practised, kept up and cultivated – in the same way as the geometrical space of a map, an imaginary representation of all theoretically possible roads and routes, is opposed to the network of beaten tracks, of paths made ever more practicable by constant use" (Bourdieu 1977:37).

My own fieldwork concerns the Sa'dan Toraja of Sulawesi, and if I venture to add anything to the already existing literature, it is because to date very little published material is in fact available on the subject of Sa'dan Toraja kinship; recent studies (Nooy-Palm 1979; Koubi 1982),

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H. ROXANA WATERSON, who took her Ph.D. at New Hall, Cambridge, is currently a Visiting Fellow with the Institute of S.E. Asian Studies in Singapore. Interested in kinship, gender, ritual and the anthropology of architecture, with special reference to S.E. Asia, she is the author also of *Ritual and Belief among the Sa'dan Toraja*, University of Kent Centre of S.E. Asian Studies Occasional Paper no. 2, 1984. Dr. Waterson may be contacted at ISEAS, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511.



#### MAP OF TANA TORAJA

Names of towns and villages in bold print

Names of Kecamatan (districts) in light print

— = main road

substantial as they are, scarcely touch upon it. Following writers such as Kemp (1983) and Benjamin (in press), I argue here that kinship idioms provide Torajans with one set of ideas by means of which they shape their social world. In a cognatic society such as this, a superficial glance at kinship structure and terminology can give at best a hazy impression of how kinship actually functions in everyday life. Understanding how kinship ideas operate in Torajan society requires a close analysis of how terms are actually used, since these often bear little relation to genealogical reality. To view kinship as a form of ideology, therefore, enables us better to deal with the strategic nature of kinship relations in a flexible system where the edges of groups or of individual commitments cannot be precisely defined. Rather than being tempted to view "kinship" itself as a bounded entity or formal system, we may then the more easily perceive where "kinship" merges into other modes of thinking – those to do with rank or gender, for example.

The Sa'dan Toraja, who today number around 320,000, inhabit the mountainous northern region of the province of South Sulawesi. They have a cognatic kinship system, typical of the societies of Western Indonesia generally. Terminology is basically generational, no distinction is made between cross and parallel cousins, and there is a tendency to extend immediate kin terms – father, mother, grandparent, sibling, child, grandchild – to all relatives as well as to unrelated people in the appropriate generation, merging everyone of the appropriate status into a single category, or at most two categories distinguished only by sex. As in many other South-East Asian societies, the tracing of descent through certain important family houses is also a prominent feature. Both men and women trace their descent through the houses where their parents, grandparents and more distant ancestors were born, maintaining links throughout their lives with a number of different houses. While doing fieldwork among the Toraja in 1978-79, and again in 1982-83, I was drawn to a closer investigation of kinship issues partly because of my puzzlement as to where boundaries of membership in these houses could be drawn.<sup>1</sup> Looking for the edges of an individual's acknowledged allegiances to kin also meant tracing the ties between cousins and trying to find the cut-off point where cousinship could no longer be traced or used as an active principle. This in turn was bound up with the way kin terms are used in everyday life. Having collected the anthropologist's statutory list of existing kin terms, I remained unsure whether the system should be termed "Hawaiian" or "Eskimo", since one's interpretation would be different if one were taking the vocabulary of existing and potentially useable terms as data, than if one were to examine the practical use of terms, whose relation to actual genealogical relationships between the people concerned was often hard to discern. In particular, there exist terms which permit the differentiation of degrees of cousinhood (first, second, third, etc.); but in practice these are avoided

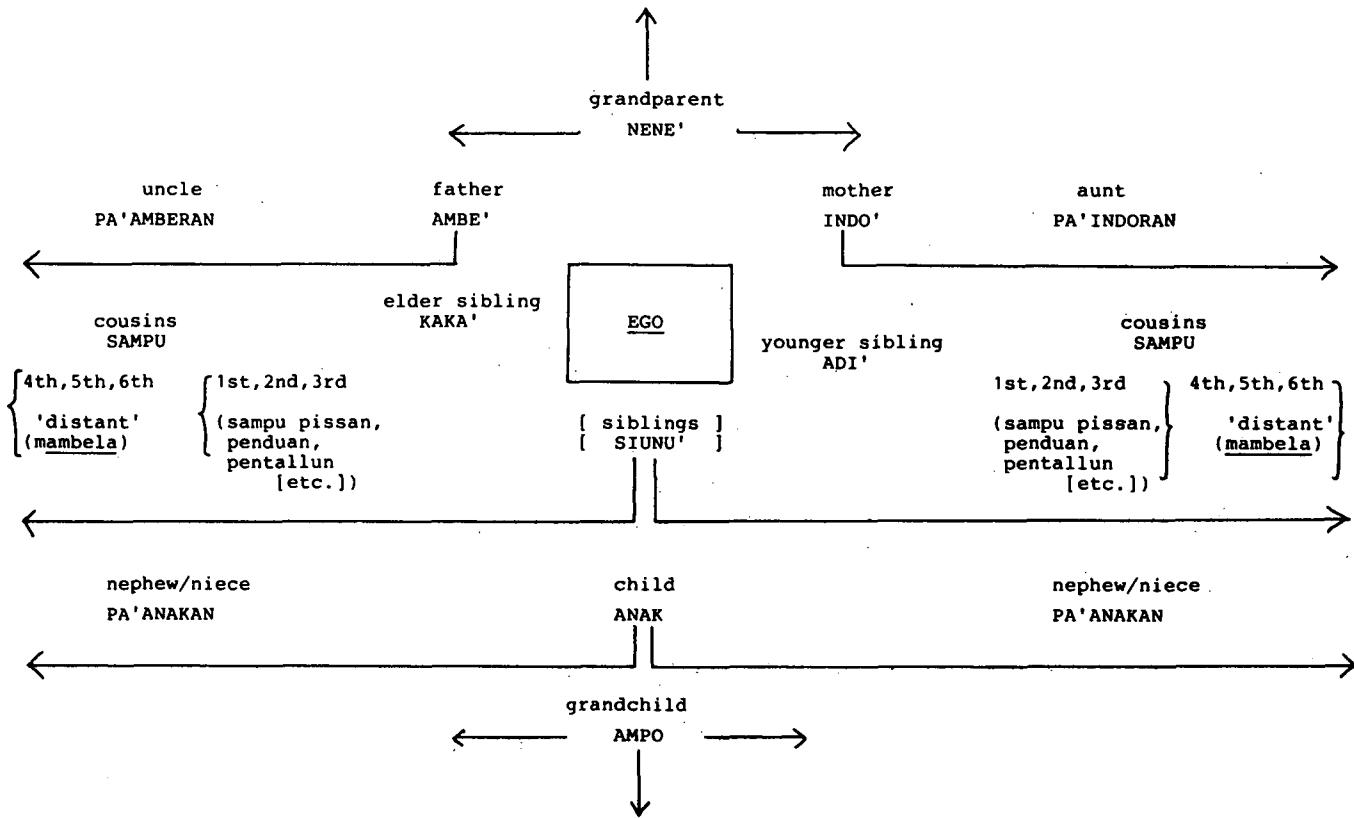


Diagram (1): Extension of kin terms

much of the time in favour of an extended use of sibling terms. Diagram [1] shows the manner in which kin terms may be extended in this way.

Kemp, writing of Thai and Malay kinship systems, proposes that the problems of classification which anthropologists have experienced over them are theoretical rather than empirical issues, caused by the interest in taxonomic structures of kinship terminology and the dominance in the 1950s of essentially unilinear descent models. Much of the basic ethnography of central Thai systems was done in this period (Kemp 1983:83). Instead, he suggests, kinship must be understood in terms of the values it embodies, in terms of what Fortes called the "axiom of amity" (Fortes 1970:232) and of what Bloch has called the moral and tactical meaning of kinship terms (Bloch 1971, 1973). The meaning of terms cannot be comprehended without taking into account their essentially polysemic nature, and making a full examination of their use in non-genealogical, non-biological contexts. Banks, writing on Malay kinship terms and their extended uses, takes a similar approach, pointing out the tactical complexity behind what Morgan thought of as the extreme simplicity of this form of terminology (Banks 1974:44; Morgan 1970:453). Incidentally, he also raises the issue of whether "Malay" systems are to be viewed as "Eskimo", as Downs has suggested, or "Hawaiian", as he himself considers (Downs 1967:136; Banks 1974:52). Once again this debate centres on the question of whether to take as primary evidence the existence of marker terms, which permit distinctions to be made between lineal and collateral relatives, or whether, by contrast, one should concentrate on the fact that in practice these distinctions are generally deliberately avoided.

Morgan himself, of course, regarded the "Malayan" as being represented by the "Hawaiian" form, though he never obtained a completed schedule for the Malays when he was working on his world survey (conducted largely by post) of kinship terminologies. He had a theory that the Malayo-Polynesian peoples first reached the Pacific from Hawaii. He regarded the Malayan form as being "the oldest form of consanguinity and affinity now existing upon the earth", but surmised that it was probably the same as the Hawaiian (Morgan 1970:450). The "simplicity" of the Hawaiian system, he states, "is caused by the adoption of the primary relations as the basis of the system, and by bringing collateral consanguinei within one or the other of these relationships" (Morgan 1970:453).

The arbitrariness of Morgan's schema, which attempts to define a terminology by reference to a single selected feature of it, has often been noted (see for example Needham 1971:16). Needham, following in particular the work of Lowie (1917), suggests that the attempt to define "types" of terminology is a misguided one. Instead, we should aim to isolate, for example, a "Hawaiian" *principle*, rather than a system, which will then be seen to operate to a greater or lesser degree in a continuum

of social forms, merging with other “principles” at different ends of the spectrum. Thus, whether a particular South-East Asian system really falls into Morgan’s category is a question which, though it seems regularly to recur, is in any case cast in the wrong terms. More comprehensive contextual analysis would be preferable, and this is in fact what Needham prescribes for comparative kinship studies (Needham 1971:6).

Morgan’s concept of the division between classificatory and descriptive terminologies has nonetheless been an immensely influential one, and its significance, divested of his accompanying social evolutionism, remains. Only it would seem necessary to redistribute the boundaries, greatly enlarging the category of societies that may conveniently be regarded as “descriptive”. Morgan based his distinction on the issue of whether or not a terminology distinguished lineal from collateral relatives, contrasting the two types thus generated: roughly speaking, the Euro-American societies with the rest. More usefully, we may view classificatory systems as being those which are group-dominated, where the terminology, rather than “describing” relations to ego, classifies the members of society into particular groups whose members intermarry. These groups may occur in the context of a lineage system, or of a non-unilineal moiety or generational system. The abstract perfection of these systems, typified perhaps in some Australian societies, is indicative of their domination by cosmological considerations rather than economic constraints. The ego-centricity of the descriptive type of system, on the other hand, suggests a view of kinship relations as a series of symmetrically expanding circles, growing hazy around the edges, with ego at the centre. If in such a system control over land or other assets such as titles is important, economic considerations may powerfully influence an individual’s strategies where kin and marriage relations are concerned. Where kin terms are used in a non-genealogical way in this sort of system, it is, to use Pitt-Rivers’ designation, with “figurative” rather than “fictive” intent (Pitt-Rivers 1968:408). The aim is not to assign individuals to particular groups, but to convey a certain quality of behaviour. Viewed thus, systems of the “Malay” type may clearly be judged “descriptive” rather than “classificatory”.<sup>2</sup>

My first point, then, is the importance of the non-genealogical use of kin terms in South-East Asian societies. To view these societies in terms of descent proves misleading, in spite of the importance of genealogy to certain people in certain contexts. Genealogy, in fact, is likely to appear an issue of rank rather than of the actual functioning of the kinship system. Kinship as a set of ideas, on the other hand, operates in a very similar way throughout the society, regardless of the rank differentials which may be present. Below, I examine in more detail the daily use of kin terms in Torajan society. My second point is that, where South-East Asian societies may confuse the outsider by their apparent lack of boundaries, the *house* as an institution shaping identities and relation-

ships may provide a key to the understanding of these systems. I shall focus on the way the house functions as an ordering principle in Toraja kinship organization. The phrasing of relationships in terms of "house" metaphors is particularly noticeable. For the individual, the tracing of descent through houses of origin remains an essential part of one's identity as a Torajan, even for those who no longer live in their homeland. Membership of houses functions importantly, too, as a way of filling in gaps in the genealogical memory. "Problems" in the analysis of some kinship systems, then – problems which may be the creations of the anthropologist's desire for order – may dissolve when the house is viewed as the real focus of kinship organization. Certainly for the Toraja, I believe these two features – the shifting and non-genealogical use of kin terms and the alliance of individuals through houses of origin – to be highly significant, while to search for the precise boundaries between groups will inevitably prove fruitless.

#### *Kin terms as inclusive mechanisms*

Torajan society prohibits marriage with close cousins, up to and including the third cousin. Traditionally, this prohibition could be circumvented by making a propitiatory offering, but nonetheless the rule is adhered to on the whole. The major exception is provided by the nobility of particular areas, notably Kesu' and the southern districts, who have long been in the habit of marrying first cousins, with the acknowledged aim of preventing the dispersal of property. Distant cousins, by contrast (i.e. 4th cousins and beyond), are particularly favoured as spouses. To discover the precise degrees of cousinship among my acquaintances was often difficult, however. In Tana Toraja, the blurring of degrees of collaterality is aided by the haziness of genealogical memory, which for many people does not extend further back than two or three generations. This makes it difficult to trace exact ties with more distant cousins, since the ancestors linking them have been forgotten. At the same time, the practice of teknonomy creates a downward-looking trend which the Geertzes have suggested in the Balinese case is a cause of "genealogical amnesia" (H. & C. Geertz 1975:85). Most significant of all, though, is the desire to include cousins in the category of "siblings" (*siunu'* or *siulu'*), or of *solata*, "one of us". Benjamin, in a fascinating analysis of the varied kinship systems of the Malay peninsula, also draws attention to this feature of "inclusiveness", which characterizes some Malaysian societies (Benjamin, in press). The aversion to stressing degrees of distance is an essential part of people's thinking about kin relations in these societies. When I persisted with my inquiries about degrees of cousinship, I was told that to call people cousins (*sampu*) instead of "siblings" was disagreeable and discourteous. Much the same thing is reported by Banks for the Malays of Kedah, by Kemp for Central Thailand, and by Bloch for the Merina of Madagascar (Banks 1974:63;

Kemp 1983:86; Bloch 1971:81). Commonly in these societies terms for close kin are extended to those with whom exact links may be unknown, and any denial of kinship is felt to be implicitly rude and hostile. This may apply even where non-kin, or adoptive, "social" relations are concerned.

The use of sibling terms in particular can convey a variety of information. Used figuratively, sibling terms stress an ideal closeness of relationship and the sort of affection and co-operative behaviour expected within such a relationship. However, actual siblingship is always likely to be a somewhat ambiguous relationship, since closeness can also mean competition and rivalry. In Tana Toraja, the desire to include a large number of people in the category of "sibling" is a way of emphasizing the positive moral qualities of the relationship, even though it is recognized that actual siblings are likely to feel competitive, rarely work together, and may fight over questions of inheritance. "*Sisarak tau do ampang*" – "people part from each other on the threshold" – is a saying, cast appropriately in the idiom of the house, which conveys the fact that siblings have their own fortunes to seek, and that if they become the founders of new family houses, or *tongkonan*, only their direct lineal descendants have rights in these. Similarly, Banks notes that the Malays "are unwilling to overplay or prejudge the closeness, intimacy or affection involved in any social bond, for this might produce conflict and jealousy within the ranks of those similarly related to the kinsman in question and might also create bad faith between oneself and that kinsman" (Banks 1974:62). Thus, one avoids putting too much to the test the "axiom of amity" which is so useful as a general principle.

A second use of sibling terms, though less applicable to the Torajan case, may be mentioned here because of its importance in a number of other South-East Asian societies, especially among the Malays and Javanese. This is the sort which emphasizes sibling hierarchy. Relative seniority and authority, coupled with the intimacy and affection which the relationship implies, are what is conveyed by these terms, which may be translated into the context of quite other relationships. The use of sibling terms by marriage partners has been noted in Thai, Burmese, Vietnamese and Malay societies (Haas 1969; Banks 1974). The wife calls the husband "elder brother" while he addresses her as "younger sister". She will address other men of her generation as "younger brother" even if they are older, since to call them "older brother" might imply sexual intimacy (see Banks 1974:58). This is surely the ultimate in the non-genealogical application of kin terms. The moral quality of the relationship and its figurative use quite override considerations both of actual relative age and of actual consanguinity or affinity. Figurative parental-filial and grandparental ties are likewise a common feature of Malay society (Banks 1974:61).

Kinship, then, provides the members of a society not merely with a set

of terms by which they may classify each other, but with a set of ideas. The extensive use of kin terms for non-kin demonstrates, in Kemp's words, "the role of kinship as an ideology utilized by actors in structuring their responses to social contexts". When people use kin terms in deliberately imprecise ways they are "attempting to utilize the benefits of kinship" (Kemp 1983:90). Or, as Benjamin puts it, kinship systems may be seen as "modes of consciousness, constructed from genealogical elements, which serve to mediate between the objective world in which people find themselves and the subjective world within which they act" (Benjamin, in press: 1).

#### *Houses and kin in South-East Asia*

In his recent work, *The Way of the Masks*, Lévi-Strauss devotes a chapter to 'The Social Organization of the Kwakiutl'. He points out the difficulties experienced by Boas and Kroeber in defining the kinship systems of the Kwakiutl and Yurok of the North-West Coast of North America. They found it virtually impossible to decide whether these societies were really patrilineal, matrilineal or bilateral, since they seemed to be putting into operation simultaneously a number of principles which anthropologists have generally considered to be incompatible. They tended, in their efforts to decide the question, to concentrate on negative aspects of the system: they were not this, nor yet quite the other.

In Lévi-Strauss' view, the positive feature uniting these societies is the manner in which houses function as foci of kin organization. "House societies", he suggests, may be identified over a wide historical and geographical span, including for example both feudal Europe and Japan, and the societies of the Philippines, Indonesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, as well as the North-West Coast (Lévi-Strauss 1983:176). Concern with questions of inheritance – in some cases of land or kingship, in others of titles and names – means that kin and marriage ties are frequently activated in strategic ways. Houses in this sort of society, suggests Lévi-Strauss, generally share a number of features: they have a name, which may be inspired by the location or some other feature; they are perpetuated over time and not allowed to disappear, at least from memory; they may be elaborately decorated, especially on the façade; and they are the sites for the performance of ceremonies. House societies are characteristically divided into groups putatively tracing their descent from ancestors who founded the houses. Additional features may include an alternation of generations, with a belief in the reincarnation of grandparents in their grandchildren – a feature of Tsimshian, as well as some Indonesian societies. He also notes the difficulty of distinguishing whether a society of this type has "Hawaiian" or "Eskimo" terminology, since one's judgement on this will be affected by which usages and contexts one chooses to dwell on (Lévi-Strauss 1983:176). What, however, will be noticeable is the recurrent use of "house"

imagery to express aspects of kinship and marriage relations. Where rank and inheritance are prime concerns, the tactical aspect of marriage will be seen in the occurrence, typically, of both very close marriages, in various classic patterns of cousin-marriage, and of very distant marriages, uniting kingdoms, or laying claim to new titles and lands.<sup>3</sup> Viewed in these terms, Torajan society is a classic "house" society, fulfilling virtually all of the above criteria.

The prominence of houses, both from the architectural and organizational point of view, is a feature of South-East Asian societies which deserves close attention. House styles are very obviously related to each other, and are known to derive from an ancient form. Although throughout the Indonesian archipelago we find a variety of kinship systems, I would suggest that in all of them the house nonetheless plays a similar role. There are marked similarities in style, for example, between the houses of the Torajans, and of the Batak and Minangkabau of Sumatra; yet the Batak are patrilineal, while the Minang are famous for their matrilineal mode of organization. But in all three societies, the house as a point of origin and identity is a crucial feature. Leach (1950) likewise drew attention to the significance of "house-owning groups" in Borneo societies, particularly the more hierarchical ones; and recent work on the anthropological aspects of architecture is rapidly adding to our understanding of the articulation of architecture and social organization in other South-East Asian societies (Feldman 1977; Barraud 1979; Izikowitz and Sørensen 1982; Clamagirand 1982). This work, indeed, builds on a long Dutch tradition of attention to the subject, especially in its cosmological and symbolic aspects, which goes back to van Ossenbruggen's seminal work of 1918 (see especially de Josselin de Jong 1977). Nonetheless it seems to me that the kinship systems of this area have not been systematically examined in the light of the role played by houses in their organization.

#### *Ideology and terminology: the Torajan case*

The Torajan *tongkonan*, or family house of origin, is both a material structure, the house, and a group of people, those who trace descent from its founding ancestors. The founding ancestors are always a married couple, though in certain circumstances either the woman or the man may be more often remembered and named as the founder. Thus, for example, the famous *tongkonan* of Nonongan in the Kesu' district is regarded as having been founded by a woman, Manaek, because the house was built on her ancestral land. Any one person may putatively belong to hundreds of different houses, on both their mother's and father's side, and the membership of one house intersects with that of others. Membership in many houses is possible because links are only activated at intervals, generally in the context of ritual or of the rebuild-

ing of a house, to which all members should contribute. In practice most people, having expansively declared their *tongkonan* to be innumerable, can only name the houses of their parents and grandparents, and those of their spouse's parents and grandparents – sometimes not even all of these. These are the houses with which they maintain real ties. People of high rank, on the other hand, may really be able to trace genealogical ties with a vast number of other *tongkonan*; many of these links will only be demonstrated at long intervals, if at all. The expense of participating in ceremonies is the most obvious factor which curtails involvement in too many houses.

There is, therefore, no simple way of tracing the boundaries of any single individual's allegiances to houses. Nor is it always easy to be sure what the Torajans themselves mean by the terms they use to identify the house and its members, and what little material has been published on this subject has sometimes added to the confusion. Here I shall discuss some of these terms, taking account of contextual and regional variations in meaning.

In principle, everyone of whatever rank has their *tongkonan*, in the sense of family houses of origin. However, one is forced to distinguish between the *tongkonan* in this general sense, and the word as it is often used to describe the great carved houses of the nobility, which were formerly the seats of political power over their respective communities. (Torajans themselves frequently concentrate on the latter meaning, while ignoring the general issue of membership in *tongkonan*, perhaps because the latter seems too obvious to them to merit attention.) In the westerly Saluputti district of Tana Toraja, where I did much of my fieldwork, I found that only these noble houses were graced with the title of *tongkonan*, and people would be offended if any ordinary house were referred to by this term. In other parts of Toraja usage differs, and it is said that "even the birds have their *tongkonan*". Here I shall argue that the principles underlying membership of houses are in fact the same, regardless of rank, throughout Toraja society. Rights in a house also give one a right in the rockcut graves called *liang* associated with it. These tombs are used over generations, and the bones of the deceased are carefully tended. The *liang* is often referred to as the *tongkonan* of the ancestors.

Those who trace their descent from a common pair of founding ancestors, man and wife, are called the *pa'rapuan* or *rapu*. *Rapu tallang* in Torajan means "a stool of bamboo". The family is compared to the bamboo whose many stems sprout from a single clump. The *tongkonan*, especially when being referred to in the most general sense of an origin-house, regardless of rank, is often called the *banua pa'rapuan* or "house of the *pa'rapuan*". From the same root is derived an adjective, *marapuan*, which means "having a great many descendants".

Nooy-Palm calls the grouping a *marapuan*, which she describes as "a

cognatic descent group or ramage" (Nooy-Palm 1979:22). The *rapu* is a branch of the *marapuan*, which she calls a "sub-ramage". She states that it is "highly reminiscent of rames in Polynesia", as described by Firth (1957) and Fox (1967) (Nooy-Palm 1979:23). I have reservations about this transference of Firth's terms into the Torajan context. "Rames" are a product of ambilineal systems where an effective choice between mother's and father's kin must generally be made by the individual by means of restricting criteria such as residence, or where some rights pass through one set of kin and others through another. This may give the appearance of lineality in spite of the obvious flexibility of these systems, a number of which show a marked patrilineal bias. Torajan kinship organization by contrast is profoundly bilateral. In fact it is not necessary to go so far afield to find a comparison with Toraja, when so many Indonesian societies have bilateral kinship patterns. The closest analogies to the Torajan system in my view are to be found in Borneo societies, especially the more hierarchical ones such as the Kayan, Kenyah and Melanau. Secondly, to make the *rapu* sound like a definite entity may prove misleading, for as far as I could ascertain, it scarcely deserves this characterization. Nooy-Palm's data, coming principally from the most hierarchical region of Tana Toraja (the so-called *Tallu Lembangna* or "Three States" of Sangalla', Ma'kale and Mengkendek), give the impression that house organization produces a distinctly linear trend in kinship organization. Genealogies from this area show a heavy predominance of male *tongkonan* heads. By contrast, genealogies which I collected from the westerly districts showed a more even distribution of male and female heads. While men undeniably dominate political life, women are not excluded from political roles. Where they do hold office, this is by virtue of their rank, which overrides considerations of gender. They are no less fully members of houses, with equal rights of inheritance, throughout their lives, and their ties with their own houses and kin are not weakened by marriage.

Apart from this, I found in the Saluputti region that the term *pa'rapuan* is rarely used, and is considered to be synonymous with *rapu*. *Rapu* is used in a rather general way to refer to kin, sometimes indicating only a group of close cousins, and sometimes meaning all the descendants of a *tongkonan*. In other districts, such as Kesu', a clear distinction is made between *rapu* and *pa'rapuan*. Here the *rapu* is described as a branch of the *pa'rapuan*, but the definition of these branches depends entirely on context. There is no neat correlation between a house and a *rapu*.

Any particular ancestor or pair of ancestors within a genealogy may be selected as the starting-point of a *rapu* in a given context. For example, if the founding ancestors had three children, A, B and C, then each of these might be regarded as the founder of a *rapu*, which may be described as "the *rapu* of A" or more properly, "the *rapu* of A who married X", etc. (If A married twice, first X and then Y, this would make

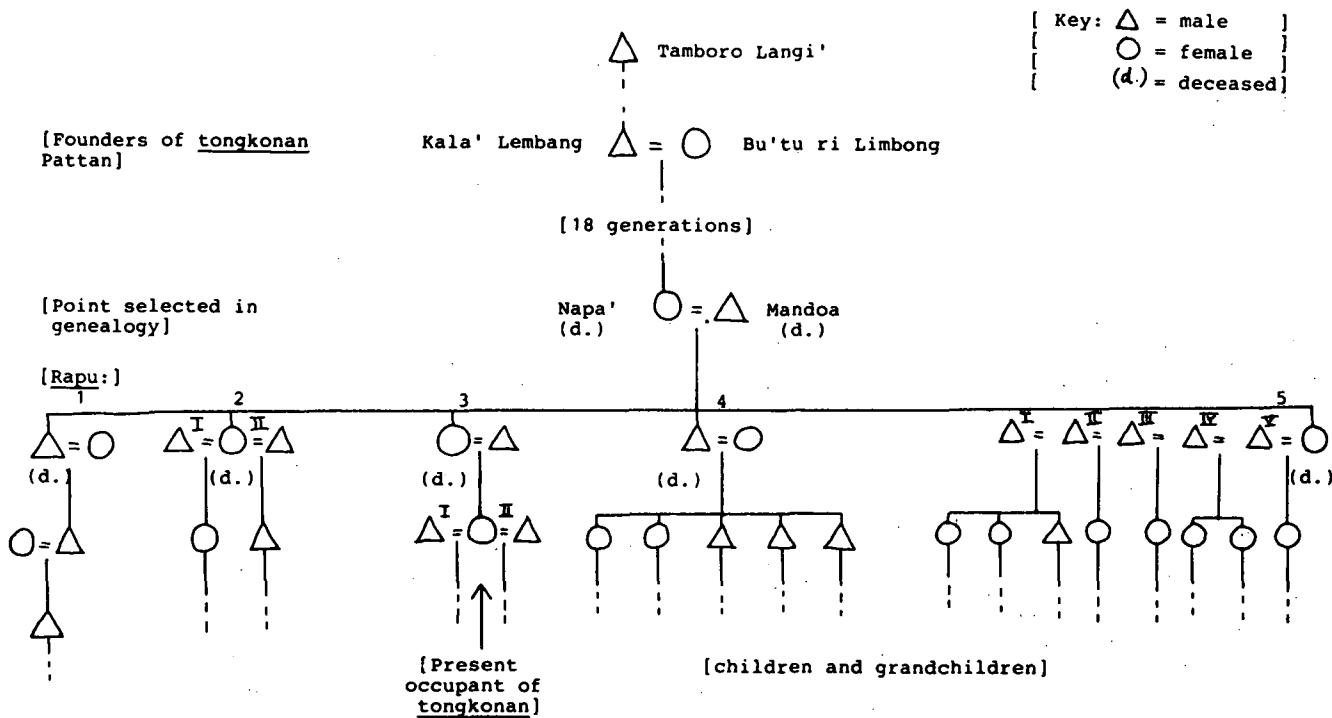


Diagram (2): Rebuilding of *tongkonan* and the selection of *rapu*  
Case A: *Tongkonan Pattan*

two *rapu*.) Ancestors at any other point on the genealogy might also be picked out. There are two contexts where it becomes important to think about *rapu*. One of these is inheritance – when it must be determined who has a right to a share of property (and the associated duty of making sacrifices of buffaloes at the deceased person's funeral). The other is the rebuilding of a *tongkonan* – when decisions must be taken as to who shall share in the costs of the work. A certain point on the genealogy will then be selected as a starting-point – perhaps only one or two generations back, perhaps many. A number of *rapu* are thus defined, among whom the expenses will be divided. Diagrams [2] and [3] show simplified genealogies in two recent cases of the renewal of a house. The first case is that of a large noble *tongkonan* in Ulusalu, Saluputti district. Its genealogy goes back 24 generations to a grandson of the mythical Tamboro Langi'. When it was decided to rebuild this house, a point five generations back in the genealogy was chosen. The couple thus pinpointed, Napa' and Mandoa, were inhabiting the *tongkonan* at the time of the Dutch arrival in Tana Toraja in 1906. Their five children were regarded for this purpose as heads of *rapu*, and all their descendants were called upon to assist in the rebuilding. The complete genealogy shows a certain amount of "shedding" or forgetting of the descendants of those who did *not* dwell in the house, but clearly this process takes several generations to occur. Tracing just the direct line of *tongkonan* residents who would have acted as family heads, we find a total of 9 women and 13 men. Interestingly, the majority of these (17 out of 22) were first-born children, and my informant, Y.P. Tandirerung, suggested that age had given them a slight advantage over their siblings in establishing themselves in this role. Such a marked bias was not noticeable in other genealogies which I collected.

In the second case, a more recent house, the grandchild of the original founder, Liling, and her husband, Lakke, were chosen as the starting-point. Their eight children (now aged between 40 and 50, with numerous children and grandchildren of their own) are treated as the heads of *rapu* for the purpose of organizing the reconstruction of the house. In principle costs are divided equally, adjustments then being made to allow for the different numbers of people in each *rapu* and their ability to contribute. In this case, contributions were not expected from the children of the eldest sister, who had died. None were sufficiently well-off, and some were too young, to be able to make a significant contribution. The present occupant of the house, who is respected as the family's most competent spokeswoman, was responsible for the plan and persuaded her siblings to carry it out, in spite of initial reluctance from some of them to spend the money. The carpenters were paid eight buffaloes for the construction.<sup>4</sup> Since she, as occupier, stood to benefit most from the rebuilding, it was decided that she and her children should pay four of these. She also paid for the materials. Sale of the wood from the old

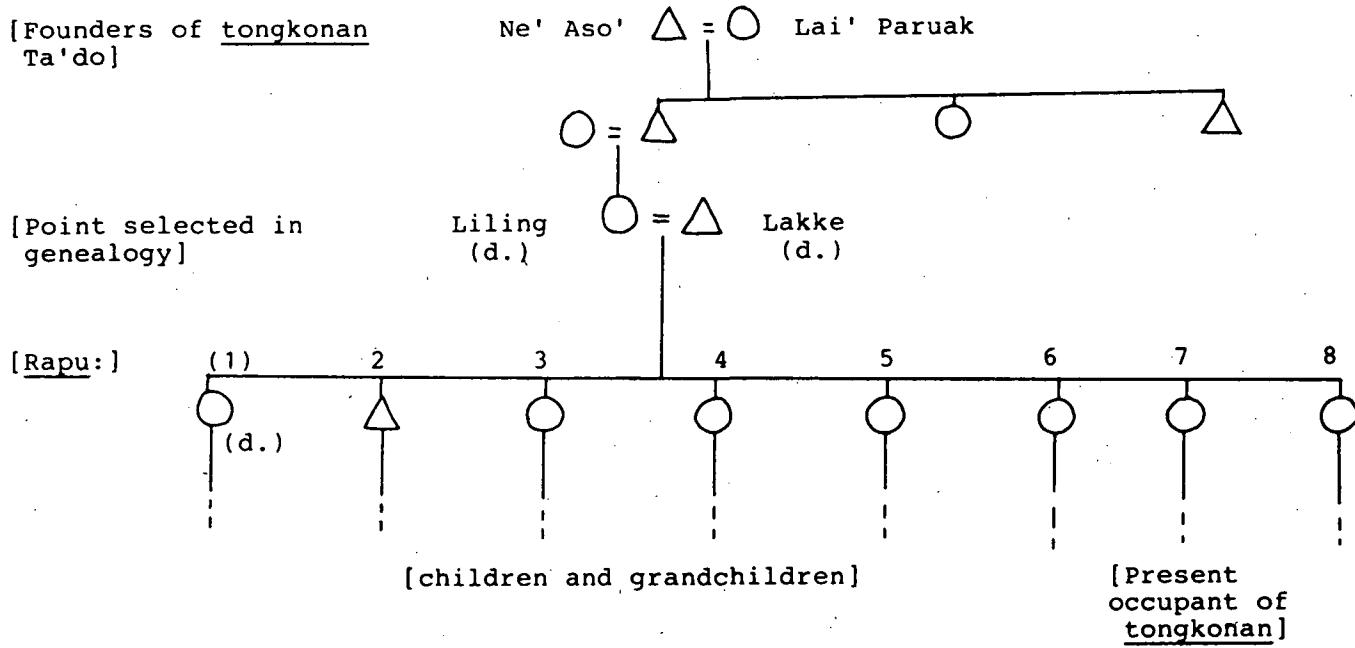


Diagram (3): Rebuilding of *tongkonan* and the selection of *rapu*  
Case B: *Tongkonan Ta'do*

house brought two buffaloes, one of which was also put towards the cost. The remaining three buffaloes were paid by the other *rapu*, each of the other six surviving siblings paying half a buffalo each.

This pattern, whereby the resident pays the larger share of the costs, is quite common, especially for houses of moderate wealth or importance. It can also happen that virtually all the costs are met by a descendant of the *tongkonan* who no longer even lives in Tana Toraja at all, but has made his fortune elsewhere and chooses this way of translating new wealth into prestige at home.<sup>5</sup> Although the more immediate descendants of a house generally concern themselves most with its renewal, all members of the *pa'rapuan*, however remote, have the right to attend the ensuing ceremony which celebrates completion of the work. By attending this ceremony, to which they bring pigs, they publicly renew their link to the house, and they must be able to prove their descent from the founder if challenged to do so.

Thus the *rapu* is not a group of fixed composition or leadership. Depending on which ancestors are chosen as its starting-point, a *rapu* may contain members of more than one house of origin, while a single origin-house may have more than one *rapu*. There is no co-operation on a daily basis – agricultural work groups, for example, are formed chiefly on the basis of neighbourhood. In addition, said one informant, migrant Torajans on the *rantaui* will tend to seek out members of the *rapu* and stay with them, but this is really to say no more than that people look for kin of any description when they are staying in a strange place. Outside, then, of the two contexts I have described – those of inheritance and of the renewal of a house – it can fairly be said that the concepts of the *rapu* and *pa'rapuan* are of little importance to Torajans.

Other terms for groups of kin are likewise context-bound. Again in the context of inheritance, we find the two terms *sarume* and *solong*, used to refer to “immediate” and “distant” relatives. *Solong* means the tough outer leaf which surrounds the young areca nut. As the nut ripens the *solong* falls off and the delicate inner leaf, the *sarume*, is seen. When a person dies, his or her children and grandchildren are termed *sarume*, and have the right to inherit property, while more distant relatives, the dead person’s siblings and their children, are called *solong*. If a person dies childless, then his siblings and their children are treated as *sarume* and have the right to compete, by their funeral sacrifices, for the inheritance, while more distant kin still become the *solong*.

A similar principle determines the rights in *tongkonan*. Imagine, for example, a group of four siblings, A, B, C and D. If one of them, B, becomes wealthy and succeeds in building a fine house, only his (or her) own children and grandchildren consider the house “theirs”. The other siblings and their children have no duty to contribute to its maintenance, nor do they have the right to attend its ceremonies. If, however, a descendant of one of them marries a descendant of B, then a tie is

created, and the children of such a marriage will automatically acquire rights in the houses of both parents. Given the preference for cousin-marriage, this in fact often happens. This sort of marriage is called *sule langan banua* ("to return to the house", "house" here having the sense of *tongkonan*). Even if the couple are not related, however, they are each supposed to take an equal interest in their own and their spouse's *tongkonans*. Links with a spouse's *tongkonans*, at first tenuous, become stronger once children are born.

Other expressions phrased in a "house" idiom are used in the context of a match between cousins. Casual sexual relations are strongly disapproved of in this context. One must not "go in at the back of the house" (*umpalao pollo' banua*), like a lover visiting secretly at night, but must make a formal proposal, "erect a stairway" (*umpatendanni eran*), as a go-between who comes with betel nut to initiate a marriage proposal comes up the front steps of the house.

So far I have been discussing terms which enable separations and distinctions to be made between groups of kin, on the basis of relative closeness or distance from a selected point. We have seen that these separations are made only in particular contexts, where it is necessary to decide rights in houses and in land. "What other context could there be?", said one very knowledgeable informant, Bua' Sarungallo of Kesu', when I pressed him on the matter. It became obvious to me that these terms were not used with great frequency. The expressions I heard most often used to refer to kin were *rara buku*, or "blood and bones", and *solata*, meaning "one of us". Within Toraja, *solata* refers to one's relatives; outside of Toraja, any fellow-Torajan automatically becomes *solata*. *Rara buku* is thought of as something inherited from both parents, who contribute equally and in an undifferentiated manner to the creation of a child. Traditional ideas concerning the male and female contributions to conception thus reflect the Torajan pattern of bilateral descent. No idea exists among the Toraja such as is reported in a number of New Guinea societies, where bones are considered a male element and blood a female one. Descending generations are thought of simply as fractions of an original whole. Children are sometimes called *sangtanga* or "a half", grandchildren *sangtepo* or "a quarter", and great-grandchildren *sangleso* or *sangdaluk*, "an eighth". Thus the expression *sangtepo sangdaluk*, "grandchildren and great-grandchildren", carries the general meaning of "one's descendants". The egocentricity of this view of kinship as divisible fractions of inherited substance is reflected in the way these terms are used. Everybody has *a'pa' tepona*, *karua lesona*, "four quarters and eight eighths", in both ascending generations – one's grandparents and great-grandparents – and descending ones – one's grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Once again these terms are useful when questions of rights in houses or property are being discussed. Just as one's "blood and bones" are

divisible, so too are one's heritable rights. Rights can also be doubled: for example, if cousins from the same *tongkonan* marry, their children have rights "twice", i.e., through each of them, in that house. If they wish they may contribute double shares if the house is being rebuilt – a way of tightening their link with that *tongkonan*, and increasing their prestige and influence within the *pa'rapuan*.

With rights come duties of a ceremonial nature. It is at ceremonies that the *pa'rapuan* comes together, and this is the main chance for more distant relatives to get to know each other. In view of their favoured status as marriage partners, it is important to know who one's distant cousins are. There is no term to distinguish marriageable from unmarriageable cousins, any more than cross or parallel cousins are distinguished; most of the time, as we have seen, they are referred to as "siblings". In the Saluputti district, still another word was often used for siblings – *sirondong*, meaning "close together". This implied even greater intimacy, freeing *siunu'* as a term to be used for cousins or relatives in general. Even so, first cousins would often be called *siron-dong*.<sup>6</sup> The meaning of these terms, then, instead of being fixed, seems to be constantly shifting, having the effect of blurring and masking degrees of collaterality. The ideal would seem to be a seamless "web of kinship", in principle infinitely extendible, in which as many people as possible can be included in an undifferentiated way. If one mistakenly suggests to a person that his kin tie is more distant than it really is, that person might reply: "*muserekki raraku'*" – "you are tearing my blood", a reproach which indicates that a split is being made in something which should be continuous.

Nonetheless, this approach to kinship raises some problems. For there are moments when distinctions *have* to be made, as when a marriage proposal is received from a cousin. People must then stop emphasizing their siblingship and redefine themselves as potential affines. Once married, they are said to have "returned to the house" (*sule langan banua*), in a phrase that once again emphasizes their consanguineal tie within the *tongkonan*, now strengthened by the new bond of marriage. The couple are exhorted to take their marriage seriously, for anxiety is commonly expressed that a divorce will have more disruptive consequences between people who are related than those who are not. If there is a divorce, then the relationship has to be rethought. It must go back to being one of straightforward consanguinity as it was in the beginning, if offended pride is not to result in a quarrel between the two families. This reshaping of the relationship is called *siala siunu'*, "to take each other as siblings [once again]". Thus, what is emphasized is the continuity of the consanguineal tie, which is punctuated only by moments (such as marriage and divorce) when affinity must be taken into account and ties must be formulated accordingly. The clear idea that marriages *should* be exogamous (beyond the range of "close" cousins) coexists with the

deliberate blurring of degrees of cousinhood, and the absence of well-defined groups of the “marriageable” and the “unmarriageable”.

Therefore a second problem is knowing who the “right” cousins are. Since most people do not know their genealogies any further back than two or three generations, one would surmise that they have difficulty in knowing who their more distant cousins are. My census of five neighbouring villages in Saluputti nonetheless showed a high percentage of marriages between people who described themselves as “distant” cousins (*sampu mambela*). Out of a total of 61 marriages, only 5 (8%) were between 3rd cousins or closer; 29 (48%) were between people describing themselves as “distant” (4th cousins or beyond), while 27 (44%) were not related. In only one of the 5 marriages between “close” cousins was the relationship closer than that of 3rd cousins – in this case the couple were second cousins, though the husband initially claimed they were 3rd cousins. (Here, the blurring of boundaries worked in the other direction, making a tie seem more distant rather than closer, since the couple were strictly speaking too closely related to be appropriate spouses.) Only 4 out of the 29 who were “distantly” related could specify the degree of cousinship between them. Instead, they said that “their *tongkonans* joined” (*sikande tongkonan*) or that they were “siblings in the *tongkonan*” (*siunu' lan tongkonan*), and they named the house or houses that they had in common. Most people said that their parents told them who their cousins were, especially when they were attending funerals or other ceremonies. Nonetheless, the exact linkage was often forgotten. Membership of houses makes up for lapses in genealogical memory; it is the houses which are remembered, even where a precise kin tie can no longer be traced.

#### *Affinity, shame and the maintenance of ceremonial relations*

When two people marry, they are said to exchange parents. The expression *basse situka'*, “exchanged promises” (*basse* can also mean a sacred oath), both implies the gaining of an extra set of parents, and signifies the adoption of ceremonial responsibilities towards one's affinal relations. In fact, it is in the context of ceremonial exchanges that these relations are largely expressed. One takes a pig to a ceremony held by one's affines, which they must repay at a later date. Thus an endless series of pairs of credits and debts is created. A husband and wife should share their resources, not only in the everyday running of the household, but in maintaining their ritual obligations to each other's families. It is wrong to sacrifice more lavishly for one side of the family than the other; a balance should be maintained. At funerals, the huge attendances are due largely to the participation of those related affinally to the hosts, especially their spouses' siblings, who will bring large groups of their own villagers with them.

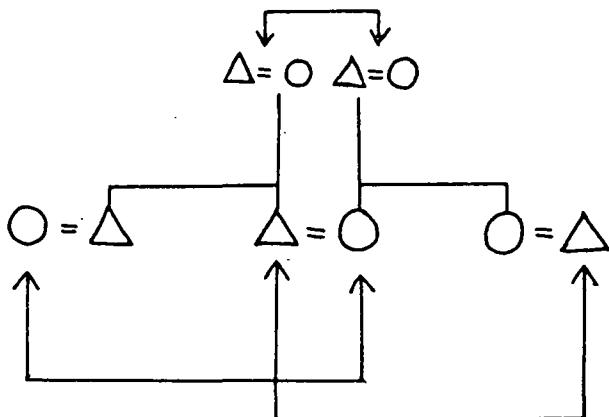
The interest which a person gains in the houses of a spouse may also be

shown in the efforts put into repairing or renewing a house. Given the strong preference for uxorilocality in Tana Toraja, it often comes about that a man puts his energies and resources into rebuilding a house that actually belongs to his wife. Naturally, if he and his wife are resident in the house then it is in his interest to do so. (Out of a total of 61 couples in my household survey, 45 (74%) resided in the wife's house, or a house belonging to her family, not necessarily in her village of birth; 16 (26%) lived in the husband's house or a house of his family.) Generally speaking, the actual residents of a *tongkonan*, as we have seen, pay the biggest share of the costs of reconstruction. A man will also help with rebuilding his own family *tongkonan*, though as a non-resident his share in this may be smaller. Affines are called *to rampean*, "those who arrive". A man coming to take up residence in his wife's village is a newcomer who is expected to be co-operative both within her family group and within the village community, which performs certain tasks jointly. It is after the birth of children that one's involvement with the houses of one's spouse becomes permanent. A childless person retains no interest in the *tongkonans* of a spouse after divorce or death, whereas those who have children may continue to attend each other's ceremonies, because of their children, even after a separation.

The parents of those who marry call each other *baisen*, and ideally should also establish friendly relations. *Baisen* corresponds to the Indonesian and Malay term *besan*. The existence of a term for this relationship seems quite widespread in South-East Asia. In Bali, the Geertzes note, a child's spouse's parent is referred to as *warang* (H. & C. Geertz 1975:171). Kemp also notes that a term exists in central Thai terminologies (Kemp 1983:86). The actual warmth of the relationship depends on those concerned, but is likely to increase after the birth of children. If they wish they may also undertake some ceremonial exchanges. One informant explained to me that since they had both become grandparents, his relationship with his *baisen* had become very close. They had brought a pig to his house ceremony, and later, he had reciprocated by taking one to a similar ceremony of theirs.

A second affinal relation which in Toraja receives a special designation is that of a person to the WZH or HBW (see diagram 4). This is called *sanglalan*, meaning "one path". Here, the strength of the relationship depends even more on the individuals involved. As with *baisen*, the tendency is to express any closeness in the form of ceremonial attendances and contributions. At a large funeral held in Saluputti district in December 1982, one man explained to me that he had travelled from Jakarta to be present, largely because of his *sanglalan*. The latter, a prominent civil servant in Jakarta, was a grandnephew of the deceased. He had called on all his relatives to attend, and had sent money to the family in Tana Toraja in advance to help pay for many of the preparations. "All those who consider themselves children and

**BAISEN**



SANGLALAN

[WZH; HBW]

Diagram (4): *Reciprocal ties between affines*

grandchildren", he had said, "will be there. Those who can't afford to fly can go by boat." In this case, the *sanglalan* relationship had no doubt been cultivated as a useful connection, probably by both sides.

That these two affinal ties are singled out and given special terminology requires some explanation. Once again, they do not define any *groups* of "kin" versus "affines", but rather must be viewed as expressions of a basically symmetrical and reciprocal relation whose focus is the married couple (and their children). Just as kin terms do, they describe a relation to ego, the egos here being a woman and her husband. The strength of the tie thus designated is not yet a foregone conclusion. The couple's parents, as *baisen*, are linked by an event which is to take place in the future - the birth of children who will eventually inherit from both of them. As with the practice of teknonymy, there is here a downward-looking attitude to descent which moves the emphasis away from a purely ancestor-focused approach to genealogy. Similarly, it seems probable that the mutual interest which links the *sanglalan* is at bottom also that of inheritance, viz., their access to land that may be inherited by their spouses and which will eventually pass to their children.

As I have shown, my data demonstrate a clear statistical preference, matching the expressed preference, for marriage with "distant" cousins. There is no doubt that, to some extent, this is the result of demographic

factors, people tending to marry within a certain radius, within which they have a large number of kin anyway. However, some clear reasons are also expressed for this preference. Firstly, one can more easily find out about the person and his family, or one already knows him. More importantly, where a marriage takes place within the *pa'rapuan*, the obligation to compete in the making of ceremonial prestations is minimized. Competition can be very intense between two unrelated families, and then the expenses are likely to become extremely burdensome. Members of the *pa'rapuan*, on the other hand, feel united by their shared blood ties and common interests, and will not be too exacting on each other. Those who have married into a family from a different area may often be heard to complain about the demanding, arrogant attitudes of their in-laws, and the risk of one family shaming the other in public is a source of anxiety. Many people feel pressed by the question of how to curtail ritual expenses. Those with limited resources would today often prefer to spend what they have on other things, such as the education of their children, giving them a chance to better themselves. Large families and pressure on ever dwindling shares of rice land make it impossible for all children to farm, and most families hope to have at least one migrant member whose remittances will help them out at home. In some regions, particularly in the north, virtually all young people have left their villages (see Volkman 1980:77).

Traditionally, then, Torajans preferred to marry not too close, but not too far away either. Today, another option presents itself, namely, to marry someone from outside Tana Toraja altogether. That this has definite advantages was pointed out by a number of informants. An educated spouse with good job prospects in another part of the archipelago means enhanced living standards and a greater network of contacts outside Tana Toraja itself. Today in Toraja, as elsewhere, those who are educated prefer each other as spouses. One man suggested that the old restrictions on intermarriage between ranks, which prohibited a woman from marrying beneath her, had now been replaced by a new, educational hierarchy. Like the slaves of the past, the illiterate were on the bottom rung of this ladder, while the élite was formed by university graduates! The suddenness of social change is reflected in some of the genealogies I collected. Whereas for generations people had married within a very close radius, in the last two generations this pattern had changed utterly in some families. People whose parents had been among the first Torajans in Dutch times to travel abroad, had themselves almost all married non-Torajans, often people they had met while studying in other parts of Indonesia. Members of other ethnic groups sometimes express their reservations about the possibility of marrying a Torajan, for, they say, you will never be out of debt once you become involved, as an affine, in Torajan ceremonial life. But Torajans themselves see marriage to an outsider as a means of curtailing expense. One friend illus-

trated the point with the story of a relative who had been courted by a Javanese lawyer. Her family had been all in favour of this match, but before it could become a reality, it was discovered that she had been having an affair with a young man from Pangala', a northerly district of Tana Toraja, and was expecting a child. She had to marry this man, and her family have been complaining ever since about the arrogance of the in-laws they have thus acquired and the expense of attending their celebrations. Had she married the Javanese suitor, things would have been very different. Since it is affinal relations who create many of one's ceremonial debts by their attendance at one's family ceremonies, especially funerals, to have non-Torajan affines is the most effective way of curtailing these obligations. They will not be participating anyway in the system from which it is so difficult, as a Torajan, to extricate oneself.

### *Conclusions*

I have aimed here to demonstrate the extent to which the meanings of Torajan kin terms are shifting and context-bound. Far from being exceptional, I have suggested that this is actually typical of a whole group of South-East Asian cognatic kinship systems. The "inclusiveness" of the Torajan use of kin terms is a part of this pattern. The ideology of inclusiveness prevails for much of the time in Torajan talking and thinking about kinship, and terms are used in a way which reinforces this thinking. Nonetheless the desire to treat kinship as something seamless and continuous inevitably gives way at certain moments to the necessity of sharper definition between those who are "close" and those who are "far away" from a given point. This happens when rights to houses, graves and land are in dispute, or when a consanguine must be redefined as a potential marriage partner, and relations momentarily cast in terms of affinity rather than of "blood and bones". The reality of the often fierce competition between siblings is a fact of which the Toraja are well aware, and which, again generally in the context of inheritance, may belie the ideal of inclusiveness inherent in the all-embracing use of sibling terms. The subject of contested claims to shares in houses, land and graves is one with which I hope to deal elsewhere. A sort of strategic "inclusiveness", as well as adaptability to changed circumstances, may be seen too in the willingness to treat complete outsiders as suitable, even especially desirable, marriage partners.

Regarding the Sa'dan Toraja as a classic example of what Lévi-Strauss has termed "house societies", I have also dwelt upon the importance of houses in shaping kin relations. Not that these houses need necessarily function to produce neatly bounded groups of kin; if boundaries are porous, and groups are continually being redefined according to the context of the moment, then this is exactly what we should expect of such a system.

A fact that emerges clearly is the importance of the *ceremonial context*

in which relations of affinity are actively demonstrated. Here, perhaps, is a theme which links a system like the Torajan one to unilineal ones in Indonesia, which in other respects appear so obviously different. Many Torajans express the opinion that ritual attendance, and the complicated sharing of meat which it involves, is *the* essential feature of Torajan social life. For emigrant Torajans, the return home to participate in rituals may serve as a reaffirmation of ethnic identity. In spite of the desire expressed by many people to limit the inevitable expenses of ceremonial involvement, ritual remains an important part of Torajan life. Expenditure on funerals, as on the renewal of houses of origin, has if anything grown with improved economic circumstances over the last two decades. The extent to which Torajans have moved beyond their homeland to take advantage of new economic and educational opportunities, while still retaining such remarkably strong attachments to their houses of origin, is one indication of the adaptive potential of the Torajan kinship system.<sup>7</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 Fieldwork in 1978-79 was funded by an SSRC Studentship. A Cambridge University Evans Fellowship and a British Academy South-East Asian Fellowship enabled me to return to the field for 8 months in 1982-83. I gratefully acknowledge the support of these bodies, and also the sponsorship of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), who granted permission for the research.
- 2 Paul Jorion generously gave the time to discuss with me my data on Torajan kinship and I am grateful to him for many of the ideas expressed in this paragraph.
- 3 This is just the pattern we find among the Torajan nobility, who as well as showing a preference for marriage with first cousins, have also intermarried over many generations with the royalty of the Buginese and Makassarese kingdoms of South Sulawesi.
- 4 Calculation of the value of such things as houses in terms of numbers of buffaloes remains a common practice in Tana Toraja.
- 5 The *tongkonan* resident is chosen by a meeting of the *pa'rapuan*, who traditionally selected from among themselves the person who was wealthiest, cleverest, bravest, the best public speaker, etc. This might be a man or a woman, though particularly if a woman is chosen, her spouse must also be regarded as competent and reliable. The resident of a ruling noble *tongkonan* in the past also exercised political power over the community of which the house was the conspicuous centre. Today, such a *tongkonan*'s descendants have often made their careers away from home, in the wider political arena of national government and administration. They may wield more influence within the *pa'rapuan*, and make bigger contributions, than the *tongkonan* resident, even though they are not there most of the time. Thus it is no longer necessarily true that the resident is the richest or most powerful member of the *pa'rapuan*.
- 6 I came across one other term for siblings, *sile'to*. This is a regional variant, which according to Tammu and van der Veen (1972) is used particularly in the Sangalla' area. *Le'to* means "to split" (as, for example, firewood), and *sile'to* has the sense of two halves "split" from a single whole. Tammu and van der Veen give the expressions *sirondong lan mai tambuk*, and *sile'to loloku*, which mean "together in the womb" (i.e., from the same womb) and "split from my (i.e., from the same) umbilical cord" respectively (Tammu & van der Veen 1972:309, 489).
- 7 The strength of the ties of emigrant Torajans to their *tongkonans* is well demonstrated in the study by Nooy-Palm et al., 1979. On this subject see also Waterson 1984.

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