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Kinship, Property and Inheritance
in Kerinci, Central Sumatra

C.W. Watson

Centre for Social Anthropology and Computing
and the Centre of South-East Asian Studies
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1. The street below the Mosque in Pondok Tinggi

Ila tuto, ila dusanak,

Ila tambo, ila tanah.

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Preface

[This book is an almost verbatim copy of my PhD thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge in 1981.]

The data on which the thesis is based was collected in the field in Kerinci. The secondary sources of information which I have consulted in libraries in Cambridge, London and Leiden are documented in the text of the thesis, in footnotes and in the bibliography. Indonesian texts, some of which I obtained through friends and some of which were publicly available in Indonesia, have also been used, and these, too, are mentioned in the text.

There are numerous people whom I should like to thank for their help to me while this thesis was in preparation. If I do not mention them all by name, I hope that those who are not named will not take offence and will realise that their help was nonetheless appreciated and remembered, but considerations of space made the inclusion of all names impossible.

The idea of doing research in Kerinci occurred to me before I came to Cambridge while I was still on the staff of the National University of Malaysia, and I should like to thank that institution for having awarded me a generous research grant to do some preliminary work in Kerinci in 1975. For major financial support I am indebted to the Evans Fund Committee who awarded me the Evans Fellowship for three consecutive years from 1977-1980, and thus made it possible for me to work for a doctorate. I am also grateful to the Social Science Research Council, which, first of all, through a studentship financed a year in which I did the Certificate Course in Social Anthropology in Cambridge, and subsequently, through a research grant supported fifteen months in the field in Sumatra. I was also fortunate to be a recipient of a Netherlands Ministry of Education award to work in Leiden for nine months in 1978, and for this I am grateful to the Netherlands Government.

I also wish to thank the administrators of the Wyse Fund for two separate small grants. My College, Jesus, also awarded me some money from the Bane Fund for which I am grateful, and I should also like to state here that the process of writing the thesis was made considerably easier than it might otherwise have been, by being able to work in congenial and strategically located accommodation which the College provided for myself and my family.

People from various institutions were very helpful to me. Officials of the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia did their best to expedite for me the granting of the permissions necessary for conducting research in Indonesia. The Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Padang, kindly agreed to sponsor my research and helped me in many small ways. I should like to thank, in particular, Drs. Amir Hakim Usman of that institution who took a personal interest in my research and helped me considerably. In Leiden I was attached to the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde and was allowed generous access to the collections there. The staff of the Instituut were helpful. I am especially grateful to Professor P.E. de Josselin de Jong for his kindness to me. I also want to acknowledge the hospitality of Dr. P. Voorhoeve and his wife.

For supervision of my research and for comments on ideas and methods I am indebted to a number of people. Barbara E. Ward set me off on my research, encouraged me and took me through the initial stages before she took up an appointment in Hong Kong. Dr. Alan Macfarlane subsequently supervised my work. I am deeply grateful to him for his encouragement and also for the promptness with which he commented on my fieldwork reports. Although he has numerous teaching and research commitments he has always been an exemplary supervisor in the way he has advised me and commented on my work. I should also like to thank in general members of the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology who were kind enough to give me their time in discussion and correspond with me in the field. Personal friends in Hull, Leiden and Sydney made perceptive comments and their interest in my work was a support to me.

I am grateful to Diane Quarrie for typing the manuscript and to Morag Woudhuysen for drawing the maps.

My greatest debt is to the people of Kerinci, in particular to the villagers of Pondok Tinggi. Their kindness to me and my family made the experience of being in the field exhilarating and intensely enjoyable. I can do little to repay that kindness, but I hope that, in some small measure, the description of life in Pondok Tinggi found in this thesis will be, in the years to come, a record of some interest to them and their descendants: *forsitan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*. Doubtless, despite the change of names, if they read this thesis some individuals will recognise themselves in the cases mentioned in the text. I hope that no one finds any of the references offensive, but if they do, I hope that I shall be forgiven by them: *maaf tahir dan bathin*.

And of my debts to the people in Pondok Tinggi one stands out: what I owe to Induk Dewi. Like Theognis I, too, can say:

οὐδέν, Κύρν', ἀγαθῆς γλυκερώτερόν ἐστι γυναικός
μάρτυς ἔγω ... ἀληθοσύνης

For so many reasons, as our friends know, without her it would not have been possible. This thesis is for her.

Postscript (July 1992)

My doctoral thesis was written very hurriedly in 1980. I had just come back from the field. I had a family to support and my money was going to run out at the end of the year. At the same time my wife was expecting our twin sons and there were complications with the pregnancy. All in all it was a difficult time, which even after a period of twelve years, I still look back upon with pain. As for the thesis, it was perhaps not the one which I had intended to write, which was going to be more about economic organisation and historical development, but I was reasonably satisfied after I had written it that it would do: it provided a sufficiently detailed and nuanced account of the complexity of kinship relations in Kerinci which might act as a building block on which others, including myself, could build in the future.

Re-reading the thesis I am not so happy about it as I used to be. I can see what my examiners meant when they described it as being occasionally theoretically naive. I wince at some of the phrases I used, at the occasional pomposity, at the awkward sentences, at the Eurocentric impulse to provide glosses and illustrations drawn from European models, at the sporadic instances of androcentricity which despite my best intentions crept into the writing. There is much that I would like to alter, not because what I wrote was wrong, but because it is badly expressed or needs further amplification. However, I very quickly decided that it would be wrong to change much. The situation described in the thesis was what I observed in 1978-79, and this description must serve as a base-line against which to measure subsequent changes rather than be updated in a piecemeal fashion here. Apart, then, from correcting one or two spelling mistakes, and altering very occasionally the wording of a sentence when my aesthetic sensibilities shrieked at me to do so, the thesis is the same as that which was accepted in Cambridge in 1981. The justification for publishing it now lies in the requests I have had from several researchers that the work should be more easily available.

During the last ten years I have continued to write about Kerinci, perhaps not as much as I'd have liked, but at least one or two things which have added to the corpus of knowledge of the region. For the sake of completeness I indicate these later writings in the bibliography below. Some of these have been on historical subjects (1983), one has been about Islam (1985) and there is another on the same subject in press (1993); two have been about administrative reorganisation in Kerinci to bring up to date the information contained in the thesis.

I still have to write about economic and social development in the region, but fortunately others have now spent some time in Kerinci and written about these subjects. Again for completeness' sake I mention some of their work below. The upsurge of interest in the region after its designation as an important National Wildlife Area, the Kerinci Seblat Park has encouraged a number of different research projects in the area and it is important that all these various pieces of research be properly brought together and used effectively to plan for the future. Watching developments over the past few years my impression has been that much of the research has been of a technical scientific kind, looking at patterns of land use, availability of natural resources, potential for economic development. It is often a danger that when this type of research has built up momentum some of the less technical considerations, in other words some of the issues which are concerned more directly with the social context in which the people live their daily lives tend to be neglected. Perhaps the belated appearance of this thesis, then can adjust the balance somewhat in drawing attention to the immediate social context of development and change.

Of the great dangers facing Kerinci in the next few decades, two stand out: over-population and illegal timber extraction by logging concerns. As far as the first is concerned, over-population is not primarily the result of natural growth but of spontaneous, virtually unchecked, migration into the area. No one has done or seems to be doing anything about this, but the very rapid degradation of resources in the Kerinci valley area is due largely to an insidious population explosion. This is one area which I would advise consultants and researchers to investigate immediately so that appropriate policies can be devised to check the situation.

With regard to illegal felling I have no direct evidence of logging concerns operating in the Kerinci region yet, but what I have heard, from those who know about timber extraction to the north and east of Kerinci and about the corruption in high places which allows it to go on, is alarming. Those who are concerned for the future of Kerinci need to be extremely vigilant, monitoring not only what happens in Kerinci itself but also on its borders. I know

that the newly established Forestry Protection Institute, under the sponsorship of the WWF, is doing just this, but it needs all the support it can get, nationally and internationally if the ideal of the National Park is to be realised.

A final word of acknowledgement. Looking back at my thesis I find it churlish that I did not take more time to thank those who helped me in the field in Kerinci; the blanket expression of gratitude was really not acceptable. So with apologies for not mentioning them the first time round let me thank in particular the following: Dra Martini Jufri of the IKIP Padang who helped me to conduct some nutritional surveys; the late Burhanuddin Rio Pati; Ir Zainir Zakaria, the specialist Extension worker of the Department of Agriculture who put his facilities at my disposal in Kerinci; the late Sofian Arif and his staff at the local Agricultural Office and at Agricultural High School in Kerinci who were extremely helpful and forthcoming; Sdr. Abdul Muis, Sdr. Mahir, Sdr. Saiful, Sdr. Asri Rahman, all of whom helped me carry out some extensive household surveys; Sutan Kari of Kumun; my friends from Rawang. They and many others whose help and kindness I remember with affection and gratitude contributed very substantially to the writing of this book.

As was the case with the thesis, this book is dedicated to the "onlie begetter", Induk Dewi.

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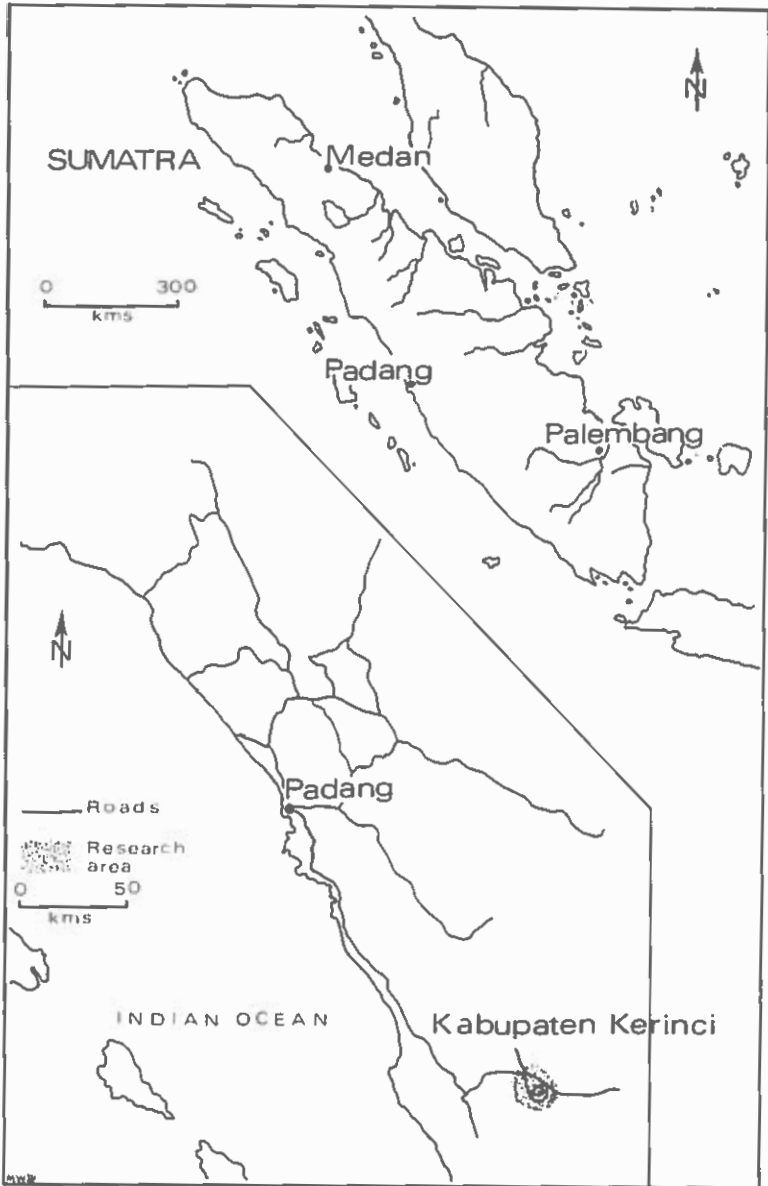
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1. Map showing area of research

