

## Introduction

This thesis is about kinship and social change in the Kerinci valley, an isolated region in the mountains of Central Sumatra. It is an area about which little has been written, at least of an academic nature. There are several official reports written for the purposes of the colonial administration, but since these date only from the end of the nineteenth century they provide an account of only the most recent past, and besides, their treatment of social organisation, as one might expect, is weighted towards consideration of matters of administration and government. Questions of kinship and family life are only mentioned in passing. There are one or two articles by observers who came to Kerinci on brief visits in the twenties and thirties and occasionally one can glean some information by looking through these. The one sustained scholarly work about the region is by H. Morison who was a colonial administrator in Kerinci in the thirties. He wrote a doctoral dissertation entitled *De Mendapo Hiang* in which he described the *adatrecht*, the customary law, of one district within Kerinci. The book is thorough and informative but very limited in scope since it deals mainly with various principles of customary law and the slant is again towards problems of administration.

One of the reasons why Kerinci has been so far ignored by anthropologists is because it has usually been assumed that the valley, which borders on West Sumatra and has always had close contacts with that region, is simply a *rantau* area for the Minangkabau, where the latter have settled and formed colonies as they did on the West coast. At first sight, then, there is little to draw to Kerinci the anthropologist who is more interested in esoteric Minangkabau culture as it exists in pristine form in the heartland rather than in its manifestations in the border areas. In fact, however, Kerinci is different from Minangkabau in most respects. There are superficial similarities, it is true, but in fact the matrilineal streak in Kerinci culture and institutions which resembles what is found in Minangkabau is more deceptive than helpful in its resemblance when it comes to an understanding of Kerinci society.

Since so little has been written about social organisation in Kerinci, part of the purpose of this thesis is to fill the gap in our knowledge of the ethnography of the area, and to provide some detailed information about kinship. The student interested in kinship terminology or in marriage institutions or in behaviour among kinsmen will, it is hoped, find sufficient here to enable him

to make comparisons with what happens in West and South Sumatra. In kinship studies there is always a problem of which analytical approach to adopt and, as anthropologists have been made only too well aware, the academic descriptive vocabulary intended to clarify issues often ends by obscuring them under a host of terms which mean different things to different anthropologists.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be as true of Sumatran kinship studies as of any other. I have tried neither to shirk problems of analysis, nor unnecessarily to convolute them further, but since my aim here is first of all to describe the situation and not address myself to controversial issues such as cross-cousin marriage, I have concentrated on keeping my remarks brief and on defining and describing terms and relationships as lucidly as possible. And I have often preferred to retain indigenous words rather than gloss them in an academic translation.

Although the ethnography takes up a substantial portion of the writing, I have also attempted within the compass of the thesis to discuss kinship in relation to that subject which more than any other fascinates contemporary anthropologists: social change. It is the source of endless debate in relation to Minangkabau society and it is within the context of that debate that I have found it most useful to consider change in Kerinci. The questions that scholars have posed have been concerned with how long can a society like the Minangkabau withstand the impact of modernising influences which inevitably come into conflict with matrilineal institutions,<sup>2</sup> and to what extent have these institutions already, in fact, undergone change in the last one hundred years. The classic statement outlining the problem comes from Schrieke writing more than fifty years ago.

Unquestionably the organisation of the Minangkabau community even now rests on the traditional basis and Minangkabau society moves within the framework of *adat*. But this must not blind us to the fact that natural social forces are unceasingly busy undermining that basis, labouring to make that framework fall to pieces. The outer appearance of social forms must not mislead us. The "closed production economy", the economic foundation of the ancient customary social system has had its day. The undivided family property is crumbling to pieces under the pressure exerted by the money economy. Land tenure is growing less certain; economic differentiation is increasing. The restrictions laid down by tradition are becoming an embarrassment. (Schrieke, 1960:142).

The issues have subsequently been taken up by Maretin (1961) and most recently by Kahn (1976 and 1980a) and von Benda-Beckmann (1979). Maretin following Schrieke speaks about economic developments leading to

"profound changes in the social life of the Minangkabau." Kahn seems to agree with this but gives the argument an interesting twist by maintaining that the social life of the community, which often serves as "a reference point against which change is measured", was in fact an artificial creation of the colonial system which led to an ossification of the social structure in the nineteenth century. Von Benda-Beckmann rejects Kahn's interpretation of the history of events and again tries to work from an ideal construct to illustrate those changes which he thinks have occurred, and which are often, as far as he is concerned, more shifts in emphasis rather than profound structural changes.

Necessarily, all the writers have been selective in describing the changes which have come about as a response to external influences and which they feel have introduced specific innovations into the life of the community. For the most part they have been concerned with intra-family relations and to a lesser extent with the structure of authority within the community as a whole. Thus the arguments have been about to what extent solidarity and cooperation within the extended matrilineal family have been replaced as fundamental principles of organisation by the narrower interests of the nuclear family; and whether contemporary marriage arrangements reflect the influence of socio-economic pressures or are simply the same as what they have always been. Most important of all in the various discussions of change has been the examination of the effect of the rapid monetisation of the economy on the institutions of property and inheritance. The problem in this sphere has always been to try to gauge whether contemporary arrangements are an indication of profound changes of attitude or whether they are extensions of established principles already latent, though perhaps not much in evidence in earlier times. The controversy in this case has centred upon the different categories of property and the respective rights of *anak* (children) and *kemenakan* (sister's children) with respect to inheritance from a father and *mamak* (MB).

Property and inheritance are the obvious institutions to examine if one is looking for evidence of change; one does not have to be a materialist to perceive that structural changes affecting the distribution of resources in the community between generations will have numerous consequences and ramifications in the society at large. This thesis follows that line of argument and also constructs a description of change around the framework of a history of the development of property and inheritance in Kerinci. There are, however, dangers in an intensive focus on these institutions alone, the most obvious of which is the failure to perceive the issues in the context of social change on a broader scale, making it difficult to assess the significance of particular matters one discusses in the whole spectrum of events. Current

academic preoccupation with specialisation and the tendency to investigate single issues in detail have added to this risk of missing the wood for the trees. It is something of which I have been very conscious when thinking about the themes of this thesis, where considerations of form and presentation of argument have led me to exclude discussions of, for example, demographic change, the incorporation of the regional economy into the international market economy, the effects of education on the community, the influence of religious movements, agricultural innovations and other significant matters relating to social change. All these receive passing mention but none is examined in any depth. They are all subjects to which I hope to return in future writing. Where I have tried to pursue a subject in detail because I feel that it is essential to a proper understanding of property arrangements has been in the discussion of territory and village government. In earlier times villages were more or less autonomous but they have gradually become included within wider and wider spheres of political organisation, so that not only in administrative matters, but also with respect to judicial institutions, that autonomy has ceased to exist. It is important to see the stages by which this has taken place, particularly in relation to the laws concerning land, so that questions of property and inheritance can be connected to attitudes arising out of new types of consciousness which are a product of changes in the political and legal spheres. Let me try to make clear the connections by outlining the argument of the thesis.

I begin with a chapter on general information about Kerinci and then give some details about the particular village in which I conducted most of my fieldwork. The thesis proper starts with a description of the principles of kinship which obtain in the village and which are reflected in the kinship terminology, rules and expectations governing behaviour among kin, and residential arrangements. The intention of the description is to provide the reader with an overall view of the ideal kinship system from which one will be able to perceive clearly the points of difference from, and similarity with, other ethnic groups in Sumatra,<sup>3</sup> particularly the Minangkabau.

The following chapter describes the domestic life-cycle within the village and shows how the principles just recounted are realised in the day-to-day life of the community. A possible source of confusion in this chapter is the way in which the description moves at different levels of analysis, sometimes discussing different orders of problems, and some mention should be made of how this chapter is to be read. At one level the description is synchronic, dealing with the situation as I observed it in the ethnographic present of my fieldwork, and since it is a general description it works within an idealist frame of features of the system abstracted from general observations. Yet at the same time I have tried to provide a diachronic dimension by

discussing particular changes in organisation which have occurred over the last fifty years. I have done this very briefly in what may appear to be an unsatisfactory fashion since each change I document warrants a far lengthier discussion, but given the reference of the thesis there was little choice. Omission of these topics altogether would, as I have suggested above, distort the general view of social change, but close detailed attention to each would have made the thesis unmanageable. Describing, then, some of the mechanisms of change I have dealt with particular instances and examples and have moved from abstraction to a documentation of cases and events, looking, for example, at the effects of the introduction of modern educational establishments into the community. This intellectual leaping about from one form of presentation to another is not entirely satisfactory, but nevertheless, I hope that the loss in terms of sharp focus is a gain in overall perspective.

The examination of one or two themes in detail commences with the chapter on territorial organisation. Reading the literature about change in relation to property and inheritance in Minangkabau society I have always felt uneasy about the way in which changes within the village and within the kinship group regarding the disposition of land have never been clearly located within the general context of political change and territorial organisation. Historians, in particular Christine Dobbin (1975, 1977), have shown themselves perceptively alert to the problems arising from the different geographical and administrative features of different Minangkabau regions which have led to dissimilar historical developments. Kahn (1976)<sup>4</sup> is also aware of the need to consider any description of village organisation within a historical dimension, but has not yet done more than raise the issue as I am sure he would concede. What I try to do in this chapter is, first of all, to show how village government was radically changed during the colonial period and how concomitant with this change came shifts of perception as villagers became aware of themselves as members of other groups and communities than those bounded by the universe of the village. At the same time I also point out that the actual geographical and demographic shape of the community was changing during this same period and this too was giving rise to new attitudes and new principles of communal organisation, all of which directly affected questions of property and inheritance.

In the next chapter following on from this I pursue the subject of changes in the law relating to land. That these changes have come about as a direct consequence of the new economic opportunities created by the development of the agricultural infra-structure and the introduction of cash-crops is something which I take for granted. The socio-economic history of the region is a subject about which I intend to write separately at some future date. What I discuss here, though, is the forms of new legal and political institutions to

which the economic pressures led, and the way in which these institutions made it possible for people to ignore or by-pass traditional kinship organisation when it came to the disposal of landed property.

Finally, I link the discussions of principles of kinship, the new conceptions of individual identity and changes in legal and administrative procedure by documenting the history of the evolution of arrangements concerning property and inheritance. I begin with a certain amount of inevitable conjecture about the nineteenth century and work up to the present with an increasing number of examples. The emphasis in the description is always to try to pinpoint when changes have occurred and how they have been made possible by new institutional arrangements.

That there has been social change which has greatly affected kinship institutions does not seem to me open to doubt, but what I think emerges from my study is that although some of these institutions, particularly where they concern matters of legal control, have been withering away and are being replaced by national institutions of government, nonetheless others seem to undergo modification and persist in an altered form, while a third category, especially in the sphere of domestic arrangements and affective behaviour among kin, remain much the same as they always appear to have been. As one might have expected, structured relations between kinsmen in small, relatively closed communities do not simply disintegrate and disappear in the face of external pressures, and any study of the effect of development on the institutions of kinship must distinguish carefully among the latter in order to identify the force of change on village society.

## Notes

- 1 For discussions about the problems of the analysis of kinship terms see Barnes (1971) and Needham (1971).
- 2 Indeed the discussion of this problem is not confined to Minangkabau society but has been raised in a general way in relation to all societies with matrilineal descent groups. See, for example, the remarks of K.Gough (Schneider and Gough 1962:631): "I suggest that certain specific characteristics of modern economic organisation .... bring about the disintegration of matrilineal descent groups."
- 3 It will also be noted that there are many similarities between the organisation of Kerinci societies and many of the societies in Borneo. The introduction by King to the book recently edited by him (King 1978) shows that many of the problems of analysis of Kerinci society, e.g. the question of the centrality of kinship as a principle of social organisation in a long-house dwelling community, are also to be found in discussions

of the ethnography of Borneo. There is a tradition of migrations from Sumatra to Borneo and perhaps more comparative analysis of the kinship systems of both islands coupled with more historical research would deepen our knowledge of these societies.

- 4 The thesis was complete before the publication of Kahn 1980b and I have not yet been able to read that book in detail to know whether I should revise this judgement.

## Chapter 1

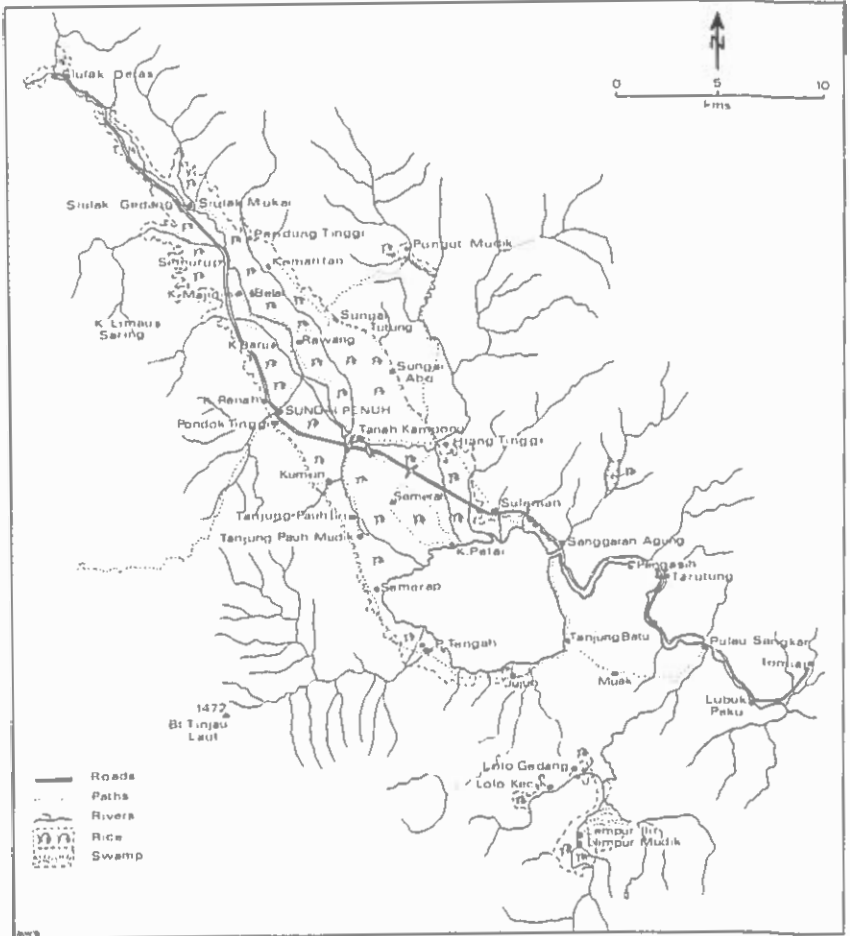
### The Background

To reach Kerinci you get on one of the half dozen or so daily buses which ply the 277 kms. between Padang and Sungai Penuh and you take the coast road down as far as Tapan, a journey which takes on a good day about eight or nine hours. At Tapan the road divides. One can carry on parallel to the coast in the direction of Moko-Moko or one can branch off into the mountains beginning the climb to reach Kerinci. It takes another three or four hours, if the going is good and there have not been any landslips, to arrive at Koto Limau Sering, the pass 1500m. above sea-level from which one begins the descent into the Kerinci valley.

On a clear day in the early morning, which is when the buses usually reach Kerinci, as suddenly a bend in the road brings it into view, one gets every now and again impressive glimpses of the panorama of the valley. At the northern end of it the peak of the volcanic Gunung Kerinci dominates the landscape and at the southern end about 50 kms. away lies the expanse of Lake Kerinci. From high up in the mountains it is easy to discern the clusters of villages down in the plain, houses set closely together with corrugated zinc roofs, some of them partly hidden by clumps of coconut trees, one village separated from another by areas of rice-field, lush green or golden yellow depending on the time of year one comes.

The valley was formed by a subsidence in the Bukit Barisan range of mountains which stretches the length of the west coast of Sumatra and thus lies in a cleft between two watersheds: on the western side the streams and rivers run down to the nearby west coast, and the waters of the mountains along the eastern perimeter of the valley including the outlet of the lake, flow into the tributaries of the Batang Hari which after a long course debouches into the Straits of Malacca. The valley is 700 m. above sea-level so that although it lies only 1 degree 30' - 2 degrees 30' south of the equator the climate is pleasant. The favourable climates within the region combined with the extremely fertile soils of the alluvial plain and the accumulated humus of the hillsides, as well as an average annual rainfall of 2000 mm. distributed among wet and dry months, make Kerinci an agriculturally rich area ideally suited for the cultivation of a variety of crops. Rice is grown in the valley





## 2. Central Kerinci

and average yields are relatively high: 4 tonnes. (*padi*). per hectare from traditional varieties. On the neighbouring hillsides the principal crops are coffee (Robusta), cloves and cinnamon, all of which at one time or another in the last sixty years have commanded high prices on the export market. A variety of vegetables and fruit is also grown, but mainly for the local market.

The people who reside in the valley appear to have migrated there over the centuries from the surrounding areas. Isolated as it is, and difficult of access, it is the ideal place of refuge for communities and individuals seeking a haven. Historical traditions related in oral accounts and in documents written down in an indigenous Indic script speak of migrants from Minangkabau coming there from the north and residing in settlements north of the lake. In south Kerinci different traditions describe origins in South Sumatra. This mixing of different peoples in the area has led, as one might expect, to a heterogeneity in the culture of the region, which is sometimes belied by the accounts of observers who tend to simplification in their descriptions and speak of Kerinci as though it were a culturally homogeneous region. This has led some writers (van Vollenhoven) to say that it lies within the *adat-trechtskring* (adat law sphere) of South Sumatra, while others (Willinck) speak of it as part of the Minangkabau *rantau* area. To avoid being misled it is important to bear in mind the diversity which exists within the region.

One mark of that diversity is the large number of local dialects which flourish in Kerinci and which differ considerably from village to village. The basic language of all the dialects is Malay, but there is evidence of borrowings from Minangkabau and Javanese. The borrowed Minangkabau lexical items predominate in the north and the Javanese in the south as one would expect. To one coming from outside Kerinci it is very difficult to pick up any of the dialects, and although one's ear gets attuned to it after a long period of residence, it remains very hard to use a dialect actively in conversation. Thus, speaking to outsiders, Kerinci people will use either Minangkabau, the language of the market place, or Malay Indonesian which many still call Bahasa Melayu Tinggi (High Malay). When Kerinci people from different villages converse they try to imitate the dialect and accent of the person whom they are addressing and this frequently leads to highly comical results (Karimi (1969) gives some amusing examples.). The peculiarities of dialects, with special mention made of the unintelligibility of that spoken in Pulau Tengah, are in fact a perennial topic of conversation of the people, who delight in word play, discussion of language and the use of allusive metaphor in everyday speech. Those who find it difficult to conceive that a Malay dialect can be as complex as I make out may care to consult the thorough phonological analysis of the Sungai Penuh dialect carried out by Usman and Prentice (1978).

Despite this diversity of culture, however, there have in the last hundred years or so been various unifying features of development which have brought the people of the region to be conscious of a Kerinci identity which unites them. Perhaps the most important of these has been the universal acceptance of Islam. Reports suggest that even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century there were still villages which had not been converted to Islam. Furthermore, of the converted villages some, it appears, were more religious than others and there is some slight evidence of there having been some inter-village skirmishes concerning religion at about that period. By the turn of the century, however, the whole region seems to have been converted and people from Kerinci were at that time regularly making the pilgrimage to Mecca, sometimes stopping over in Malaya for long periods to earn enough for their fares.

The second common experience to unite the people of Kerinci in their sentiments was the imposition of Dutch rule and the administrative unification of the area. Before the Dutch entered Kerinci in 1903 the region was divided into a number of loose confederations each comprising several villages. Although there existed a nominal bond between these confederations which were all in theory subject to the suzerainty of the court of Jambi, in practice not only do confederations appear to have had little to do with one another, even villages within confederations were more intent on preserving their own individuality than on combining in any joint action. When the Dutch did send an expeditionary force into the region on the advice of Snouck Hurgronje (see 1965:2015-2031) the consequence was that, although there was some attempt to present a united front, this was very half-hearted. In fact it seems that while some villages were fighting the Dutch with the fervour of religious enthusiasm others were welcoming the Europeans as a stabilising force in the region. These hoped the Dutch would bring an end to inter-village disputes and introduce law and order into the area which was renowned for its lawlessness.

Although the Dutch recognised the differences of cultural traditions within the region and acknowledged this by creating sub-districts distinguishing north (*Ulu*) and south (*Hilir*) Kerinci, the effect of the colonial administration was to create a sense of ethnic Kerinci identity. This was reinforced in the following years when, in the wake of the Dutch, people from other ethnic groups came into the region as soldiers, administrators and traders. Thus people in Kerinci began to distinguish themselves from Minangkabau, Chinese, Batak, Ambonese etc.

One thing which surprised the Dutch when they arrived was the size of the population. Relying on reports which had reached their administrators on the

West Coast they had estimated the population to be roundabout 200,000. In fact, they found that it was nearer 50,000 which in an area they calculated to be c.4300 sq.km. worked out to be a population density of 13 per sq.km. Some idea of the rapid population growth which has occurred since then can be acquired by a comparison with some recent figures. According to the national census conducted in 1971 the population had by then reached 187,074 and calculating on the basis of a rate of natural increase of 2.3% it was reckoned this figure would have reached 246,255 by 1981. The population doubling time is about 33 years. (This is based on using the base year of 1913 when the exact figure for the population according to a Dutch census was 59,886). The density of the population differs markedly, however, from area to area within the region and to see the position in perspective it is necessary to look at a more detailed breakdown of the statistics.

Kerinci is now one of six *kabupaten* (residencies, districts) in the province of Jambi, and within Kerinci there are six *kecamatan* (administrative units). The population densities by *kecamatan* are as follows:

Table 1 : Population Density in Kerinci by *Kecamatan*

<i>Kecamatan</i>	Population	Total Area (sq.km)	Density (per sq.km)
Gunung Kerinci	44,637	1,000	44
Air Hangat	38,103	722	51
Sungai Penuh	44,939	520	85
Sitinjau Laut	19,871	355	50
Danau Kerinci	29,779	768	38
Gunung Raya	18,960	835	23
Total	196,289	4,000	49

Source: Official *kabupaten* statistics for 1973 (July)

Since figures for population density in isolation are not very useful for giving one an impression of the pressure on land it is necessary to complete the picture with some statistics on land use.

The most prosperous *kecamatan* is Gunung Raya which has the lowest population density and the largest amount of upland per inhabitant. This *kecamatan* lies in the extreme south of Kerinci beyond the main valley. The lowland area available for rice cultivation is limited but the prosperity of the people derives from the extensive coffee gardens and cinnamon plantations which they cultivate. The poorest area lies in the *kecamatan* of Sungai Penuh.

Table 2 : Population Density in Kerinci in Relation to Types of Land

		Kecamatan			
		Area(ha)	Area(ha)*	inhab.(ha)	inhab.(ha)
G.Kerinci	123,408	1,300	24,727	0.09	0.45
Air Hangat	36,296	1,235	12,433	0.15	0.19
Sungai P.	37,386	1,195	8,291	0.06	0.13
S. Laut	12,340	650	4,350	0.11	0.14
D.Kerinci	60,253	1,370	21,937	0.28	0.49
G. Raya	93,284	611	12,887	0.06	0.62
Total	362,967	6,362	84,625	0.12	0.32

Source: Adapted from Sumatra Regional Planning Study 1973

Notes: There is some reason to doubt the figure for lowland per inhabitant in the *kecamatan* of Danau Kerinci where the compilers of the statistics seem to have confused swamp with rice-fields. The upland area refers to permanently cultivated gardens. Contrary to what is found in most Southeast Asian mountain-dwelling communities there is no shifting cultivation in Kerinci.

\*The agriculturally used area refers entirely to smallholdings. There is a large tea estate nationally owned in the *kecamatan* of Gunung Kerinci in the Kayu Aro region but this (size: 3000 ha.) has not been shown in the above statistics.

Because of the great potential for agricultural diversification in the region Kerinci has always been in recent times a relatively prosperous area. Obsidian flakes frequently found on the hillsides and evidence of a neolithic settlement in Muak just south of the lake (see a report on some excavations by van der Hoop) suggest that the earliest inhabitants of the area resided in the mountains rather than down in the valley and archaeological remains of a much later date, c.12th century (Bronson et al. 1973), found at Benik some thousand feet above the lake, give the impression that it must only have been in recent times that people began to clear the valley for rice cultivation. My impression from trying to make sense of oral accounts of the settling of villages in north Kerinci is that lowland rice cultivation was introduced into the area about five hundred years ago by migrants from the Minangkabau Highlands but I have no hard evidence to support this.

Sporadic references to Kerinci in European records throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century right up to the beginning of the nineteenth describe it as a region to which political refugees escaped after being defeated in power struggles in neighbouring sultanates, and secondly as an

area renowned for its gold. This last fact made it a place of great interest to European trading companies whose appetite was perhaps whetted by Valentijn's statement (Valentijn 1726:6) that the best gold in Sumatra in fact came from Kerinci. British officers stationed at some of the trading posts on the west coast also mentioned the presence of Kerinci traders there who brought down jungle products from the hills, in particular cinnamon. At one stage in 1766 there was even some talk about establishing a post in Kerinci itself for the collection of cinnamon (SFR 1766:vo1.74:22 Feb., 18 Oct and 15 Nov.) but there were problems of staffing and the venture never came off.

The documents kept as *pusaka* (heirlooms) in villages in Kerinci also give us some idea of the society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fortunately, a Dutch scholar, Dr.P.Voorhoeve, was given access to all these documents in 1941 and was able to transcribe them. The transcriptions remained lost for a number of years but turned up again in 1975. (For the history of what happened see Voorhoeve 1970 and Watson 1976.) A number of the documents consist of letters of instruction from royal princes in Jambi and Indrapura. The rulers of the latter appear to have valued the connection with Kerinci because of the possibilities of trade which it opened up, and letters exist, for example, from the Sultan of Indrapura requesting the people of Kerinci to bring gold and rope and jungle products down to the coast where they can trade with men from the Company who have brought special cloths (*Tambo Kerinci* 1941:136). The Jambi princes, on the other hand, appear to have been concerned with the settlement of inter-village disputes, the regular payment of tribute and the establishment of Islam. Taken as a whole these records present a picture of a region consisting of a number of autonomous confederations, with a prosperous people accustomed to regular trading relations on the coast, and living in organised settlements, who were just beginning to come into contact with Islam at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The first detailed accounts of Kerinci date from the beginning of the nineteenth century and were written by the leaders of two British expeditions which had set out from Bencoolen with the intention of finding out more about the interior of the island. (Barnes 1818; and Campbell as reported by Marsden 1811). Their descriptions, which deal principally with south Kerinci, show us a society of small village settlements comprising long-houses in the vicinity of which were small gardens where maize and various vegetables were grown. Much time seems to have been spent trading, the chief items which the mountain communities sought being salt, cloth and iron, for which they exchanged jungle products. Barnes also says that Kerinci people acted as middlemen in the opium trade getting the opium from Jambi and

then taking it down to the west coast.

Fifty years later in the first Dutch reports on Kerinci (*Koloniale Verslagen* 1876, 1878, 1880; and Netscher 1880; and TNAG 1876 Bijlage I) we find that the trading pattern has changed slightly in so far as, although it is the same items which are being sought at the coast, now Kerinci traders are bringing down coffee and tobacco. The characteristic pattern of socio-economic organisation which emerged at that time consisted of two complementary types of agricultural economy: the rice economy where the rice-crop was intended for subsistence and the cultivation of the crop was conducted according to various techniques and ritual practices established by tradition; and the cash-crop economy carried out as a secondary activity for the acquisition of goods obtainable through trade at the coast. One other important item of trade was cattle, reared in Kerinci and then driven to the coast or down to south Sumatra on journeys which took several weeks.

As a consequence of their observation of the prosperity of Kerinci traders at the coast and the accounts of the latter of their homeland the Dutch became intrigued by what they referred to as the secret valley of Kerinci. Although they tried to lead expeditions there in the nineteenth century - the famous Midden-Sumatra expedition was in fact originally intended for an exploration of Kerinci (TNAG 1876) - it was, however not until 1903 that a Dutch military force entered the valley and took it over, in the words of the military commander, in order to add another pearl to the crown of the Dutch queen. (For the Kerinci version of this war with the Dutch see Watson 1978; for a potted Dutch version see Mededeelingen 1915:46-58).

Accounts of Kerinci written either by occasional visitors to the area (C.L. 1912, Witkamp 1923, Lamster 1930, Adams 1942) or by officials in their reports (*Memories van Overgave*) show that during the colonial period the people of Kerinci came very quickly to accept the new socio-economic institutions introduced by the colonial regime. The adaptations of indigenous legal and political institutions at a local level, which the Dutch brought about in pursuance of a policy of indirect rule, were, it appears, highly successful. Even the introduction of a system of taxation seems to have been accepted without any of the troubles which accompanied this step in West Sumatra. The reason why colonial rule was welcomed was that it brought stability to the area which, to judge from several accounts (*Koloniale Verslagen*), had been plagued by a certain amount of banditry and intervillage disputes which had made trading difficult and had been obstacles to the economic expansion of the region. By improving the whole infra-structure of the society, and in particular by building a road which in 1922 at last brought Kerinci within relatively easy reach of the coast, the Dutch laid a firm foundation for the

very rapid growth of the economy which brought instant prosperity to a community rich in natural resources.

Despite attempts by the Dutch to make rice a market commodity it continued to be tree crops which attracted the people of the region as cash-crops. The replacing of Arabica coffee with the more high yielding and disease resistant Robusta round about 1918 heralded a period of economic boom in Kerinci from which people in north Kerinci, in particular, benefited, and which lasted until the depression years in the thirties. In fact this period of twenty years prior to the Japanese occupation proved to be a gentle induction of Kerinci into dependency on the international market economy. When the depression occurred, however, because rice was still at that time very important in the socio-economic vision of the villagers, the reversion to what was more or less a subsistence economy for a number of years until the international economy recovered did not bring all that much hardship. There was still a surplus of rice in the granaries.

The experience of these years - of a period of boom followed by depression as a result of external economic and political factors - became characteristic of the economy of the region as Kerinci became more closely linked to the outside world. The recovery of the late thirties preceded the Japanese occupation during which the emphasis was on food production. Then followed the Revolutionary years between 1945 - 1950 when periodic shortages of essential items such as salt led to a return of the quasi-barter economy of the pre-colonial era with villagers taking rice over the mountains to Jambi and exchanging it for cloth. The fifties saw a resurgence of activity in the coffee market and this led to a rehabilitation of the small-holdings up in the hills. The outbreak of the PRRI<sup>1</sup> rebellion brought another check to the development of the region which only began to grow once more in the late sixties as a consequence of an unprecedented sharp rise in the price of cinnamon. Almost 50% of the world's cinnamon comes from Kerinci and the upward trend of prices made fortunes overnight for those who had planted cinnamon trees years previously without ever expecting such a windfall. After a period of three or four years of high prices, however, as a result of what appears to have been manipulation by the buyers, prices dropped dramatically to about a tenth of what they had been.

Fortunately, at about the same time, coffee and clove prices rose equally dramatically, and although this was no help to farmers who had incautiously banked everything on cinnamon, the economy of the region as a whole expanded very rapidly. This recent expansion of the regional economy has run parallel to the development of the national economy as a whole which in the last ten years has opened its doors wide to foreign imports. The people of

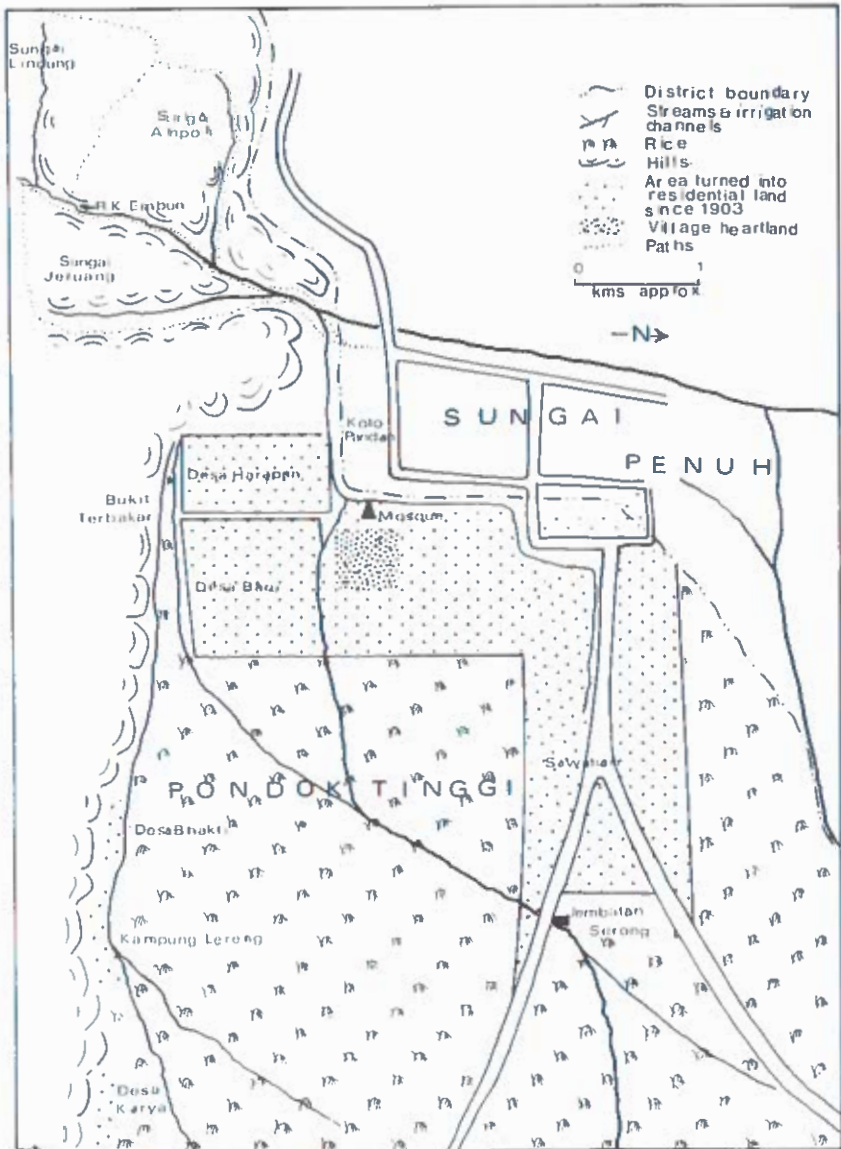


Kerinci have thus been able to use their new wealth not only for the expenses of the pilgrimage, but also for the purchase of a variety of consumer goods of which the most conspicuous have been in recent years: building materials, televisions and Japanese motor-bikes.

It would, however, be wrong to give the impression that the development of Kerinci over the last seventy five years has led only to the creation of a community of rich but ignorant farmers, which is often the image which their Minangkabau neighbours have of Kerinci people. From the earliest years of colonial rule there was always a great interest in education, perhaps engendered by a prior Islamic tradition of seeking religious knowledge by discipleship to Islamic teachers. The families who were first to take advantage of the educational opportunities which the Dutch introduced were those who lived in the villages around the town of Sungai Penuh who came into frequent contact not only with the Dutch but also with the immigrant Minangkabau. The status of civil servants in the community was very high and it was with the desire to enter their ranks that boys were eager to get a formal education. Although it was some time before the idea of an academic education and the career in the civil service captured the imagination of all, the pioneering steps taken by one or two individuals in the twenties and thirties meant that in the fifties there was a steady stream of young men and women anxious to go into higher education and pursue their studies in universities in Padang and in towns in Java. Consequently, there is today an impressive list of people from Kerinci who have made successful careers in the civil service and in the professions.

### **Pondok Tinggi**

The research on which this thesis is based was carried out in the village of Pondok Tinggi. It lies on the edge of the township of Sungai Penuh which is the administrative and commercial centre of Kerinci. The central position of the village has meant that its development over the past sixty years has brought it increasingly into the orbit of the town into which it has been geographically and socially incorporated. Many migrant traders who have settled with their families in Kerinci have bought houses in Pondok Tinggi. A number of school children from other villages in Kerinci who have come to Sungai Penuh to continue their high-school education board in houses in the village. Several senior civil servants from other regions in Indonesia who have been posted to Kerinci also rent houses there. The village is therefore much more than a community of farmers following their traditional agricultural pursuits. There are to be found traders, civil servants, teachers, artisans, market-sellers, mechanics, casual labourers and others, and the village is the



3. Types of land in Pondok Tinggi

hub of numerous and diverse activities combining typical patterns of organisation of both urban and rural communities.

In the Dutch census of 1913 the population of Pondok Tinggi was given as follows:

Men	Women	Children	total
437	488	608	1533

Source: *Mededeelingen*.

In 1976 according to village records the population was:

Males	Females	Total
4412	4881	9293

Unfortunately the 1976 statistics do not distinguish between the immigrant and native populations. Rough surveys of the twenty two neighbourhoods (known as RT) into which the village is divided for administrative purposes suggest that between a third and a half of the population comprises immigrant families who have settled in Kerinci over the last sixty years. Most of them are Minangkabau coming from the Pariaman area of the north coast of West Sumatra and from areas in the Minangkabau Highlands around Batu Sangkar and Solok.

The centre of the village is the site of the location of the original settlement and lies about 800 yards uphill in a south-westerly direction from the market centre of Sungai Penuh. The original buildings of the village were long-houses belonging to the matrilineal descent groups which came and settled there. The dwelling area of the long-house is on the first storey reached by steps which is above a ground level space used for storage and sometimes for housing domestic animals. The long-house consists of individual sections belonging to separate households each having private access to their homes, but with a small door in the common partition between sections which can be opened to connect the households. In the centre of the village known as the *dusun* there are several rows of these long-houses called *larik* some of which are dilapidated, but some of which have been attractively modernised in the past few years with electricity installed but no running water. Formerly, people went to one of the many nearby streams for water, but since the village has grown so rapidly the running water is foully polluted and in the last six years wells have been sunk at strategic points in the village. On the edges of the *dusun* individual houses of a more modern type have been built, but little thought has been given to spacing between houses and as a

consequence houses are far too close to one another and conditions are cramped and unhygienic.

The most important building of the village is the Mesjid Agung, the Great Mosque, which is deservedly Pondok Tinggi's pride. It was completed in 1902 and is a monument to the skills of the villagers of pre-colonial times. The structure about 100 ft. high is tiered like the famous mosque of Demak in Java and was constructed entirely of wood without nails being used. The inside of the mosque consists of a frame of huge upright timbers and beams which have been beautifully carved with floral designs which appear to be pre-Islamic. These designs are also found on some of the long-houses in the village.

There are four named descent groups in Pondok Tinggi known as *lurah*:<sup>2</sup> Rio Sangaro, Rio Mandaro, Rio Pati and Rio Temenggung. These names are clearly Javanese titles of the kind honorifically bestowed by the Jambi royal family on village elders in Kerinci, and presumably they refer to eponymous ancestors, but the significance of this is now lost, and for the people today these are simply the names of the four *lurah*. It is difficult to know what conventional anthropological label to attach to these *lurah*. None of the terms clan, lineage or phratry seems entirely appropriate. The groups can be further segmented into *perut*, each *lurah* comprising three *perut*, except Rio Temenggung which contains only two. *Perut* may be further sub-divided into *pintu*, but the number and composition of the latter is uncertain to villagers. Older people will usually know, not always, who is a member of their *pintu*. In other words people do not know how they are related to each other at the level of *lurah*, nor *perut*, nor even at the *pintu* level. Marriage prohibitions appear only to prevent those who are said to be close from marrying, and as far as common membership of a matrilineal descent group goes, this seems only to refer to those who share a MMM.

Nevertheless, these are corporate descent groups. They act corporately and hold corporate property. There are elected officials who are responsible for the day to day running of the *lurah* and the most important of these is the *nenek-mamak*, the representative of the *lurah*, who is in fact known as the Rio of his *lurah*. Thus there are four individual representatives referred to as: Rio Sangaro, Rio Mandaro, Rio Pati and Rio Temenggung. These names, then, refer to both the *lurah* and the individual *nenek-mamak*. To complicate matters further, within each *lurah* there are two types of hereditary honorific title: Depati and Rio. The number of people holding these titles appears to have expanded over the years. It seems that the original settlers of Pondok Tinggi, who were in fact the Rio Sangaro *lurah* who, according to tradition, came from Sungai Penuh, were given the title Depati Payung. When other

*lurah* settled there subsequently they at first shared this title but then over the years they acquired individual titles of their own which retained the original Depati Payung in the name to which special suffixes were added. It seems that each *perut* was eventually accorded a separate title. Furthermore, in addition to the title of Depati there was also a more Junior title of Rio. Subsequently, *pintu* too acquired titles and sometimes even within *pintu* there were more than one Depati. These hereditary titles pass from MD to ZS. Current holders of the Depati titles are considered the most authoritative men within the *lurah* and in traditional forums they are accorded the greatest respect.

There are two ways in which membership of a *lurah* is acquired, that is to say there are for men two types of membership. In the first place all villagers are through their mothers members of the latter's *lurah* at birth. The men of the *lurah* are its *anak jantan* (male children) and the women its *anak betino* (female children). Only *anak jantan* may hold the title of Rio and Depati and become office holders in the *lurah*. Women remain in their natal *lurah* throughout their lives, but by virtue of his marriage a man who marries a woman of another *lurah* becomes an *anak betino* in his wife's *lurah*. As an *anak betino* he is expected to be of assistance to the *lurah*, giving his services whenever the *lurah* is involved in a cooperative enterprise. In return it is the responsibility of the *anak jantan* of the *lurah* to see to the welfare of the man and his wife and children. It is a system of reciprocity, of rights and obligations, upon which, ideally, the social organisation of the community turns.

In fact, the organisation of the *lurah* as I have described it above may be considered a replica of the ideal form of kinship relations as they exist within the household at a domestic level. The role which the *anak jantan* of the *lurah* assume, for example, as the guardians and protectors of the *anak betino* is similar to the role of the in-laws or, in particular, the mother's brothers and the wife's brothers, towards the in-marrying husband. The idiom describing the relationships is identical, and certainly within the vision of the villagers the institution of the *lurah* is seen as an extension of kinship relations into the wider sphere of village government.

Leaving aside for the moment whether this identification between the *lurah* and the domestic household reflects a genuine expansion of kinship relations or whether it in fact masks what are different orders of control and organisation, let me describe briefly the fundamental principles of kinship in Pondok Tinggi.

Descent from both mother and father is recognised, but it is descent through the female line which is particularly emphasised and determines most of the

important institutions of kinship in the village. Marriage is initially uxori-matrilocal. Landed property devolves principally on female heirs. Honourific titles pass from mother's brother to sister's son. Guardianship of a family's interests is in the hands of the mother's brother, the *mamak*, who plays a role of central importance as the mediator between the family and society at large. The ideal principles according to which the society operates are matrifocal, constantly stressing a man's links with his mother, his sister and the children of the latter. In these circumstances the in-marrying husband, the father of the grandchildren of the household, is an honoured guest treated with respect and consideration, but he is in an ambivalent position because, although dwelling under the same roof as his wife and children, he does not think of the house as his home, and there are rigid constraints upon the way he behaves and expresses himself. Details of this will be found in the body of the thesis.

My first visit to Pondok Tinggi was at the end of 1972, and subsequently I have returned there several times, the last occasion being for fifteen months from August 1978 - December 1979 when I did extensive fieldwork. From the very first I was fascinated by issues of kinship. I too had expected that the situation in Kerinci would resemble that of Minangkabau very closely so I was surprised by the differences which quickly presented themselves. I began by collecting genealogies not because of any firm belief in the "genealogical method" but because this seemed the best way to learn about individuals and their families and gave me a set of references when I wished to talk about issues of kinship with people. One thing which immediately became clear when collecting this information was that there was not much genealogical depth to people's memories: most could recall members of the fourth generation above them. And yet the descent group structure seemed fairly clear-cut. How, then, was membership of the group defined? This question led logically to an investigation of the marriage rules and prohibitions and from these I quickly went on to learn about property and inheritance.

In the course of several conversations and in discussion of particular cases it was often mentioned that the situation now was very different from what it had been: that, for example, sons demanded more from the parental legacy than customary law strictly allowed them. Other people mentioned that a *mamak* was not such an authoritative figure as he had been in the past. There was in general a feeling that *adat* and village traditions had declined in importance. This type of regret for the passing of idealised former times is of course a common phenomenon and my anthropological training prepared me for what I encountered. I was thus able to perceive that underlying this constant reference to former times was a curious ambivalence. Although people

spoke with pride and nostalgia about past traditions it was clear from what they said that some of the old ways had been irksome and to their present way of thinking absurd. It was at this point that I thought about doing more detailed research into social change and the passing of traditional institutions to try to get some understanding of what precisely had occurred.

The difficulty which scholars have found in studying social development in any community is that it never seems possible to date precisely when significant change occurs. The peculiar circumstances in Kerinci, however, have made the history more accessible to investigation. Although there had, of course, been contact between Kerinci and the outside world for centuries, the valley was, until the beginning of this century, remote and isolated. Very few people seem to have visited it from neighbouring areas. This situation changed dramatically with the arrival of the Dutch. It therefore seemed to me possible to concentrate on the period of the last seventy five years as a time when changes had occurred in a sudden convulsive fashion within the space of two generations and within living memory. My intention was to plot what had happened, paying attention to historical events which had affected the community and charting the overall socio-economic development. In this way I hoped, ultimately, to be in a position to assess the validity of those statements about the decline of village institutions.

The structure of the thesis mirrors the progress of my discoveries, moving from one theme to another in much the same way as I was led to them in the course of my researches. The starting point is a description of those aspects of relationships between kin which first struck me as interesting and puzzling and which prompted me to try to discover the principles of organisation underlying what I perceived in the flux of day to day experience.

## Notes

- 1 Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia - Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia, a Sumatra based movement set up in opposition to the Jakarta government in the middle fifties which had widespread support in many areas of Sumatra including Kerinci.
- 2 The section here on *lurah*, the descent groups in the village, is over-long in proportion to the other matters discussed in this introduction. This is so because the information it gives is essential to the understanding of the details of village organisation discussed later. It replaces a chapter in the first draft of the thesis which was devoted entirely to an analysis of the descent group structure but which has been omitted from the final version to keep the thesis within reasonable bounds.