

Chapter 4

The village community and its land

History of the residential area

In the oral traditions of Sungai Penuh and Pondok Tinggi concerning *adat* and the history of the region it is related that there are four categories of territory: *koto*, *negeri*, *dusun* and *kampung* - the last sometimes being known as *lurah*. The lumping of these four together, however, is rather confusing because it appears that the first, *koto*, describes a geographical type of settlement of historical times and is of a different order from the other three, which are definitions in terms of the size of constituent social communities. *Negeri* appears to be the largest political unit recognised by *adat*, and within it are several *dusun* in which are incorporated in turn *kampung* or *lurah* which are the smallest territorial units and consist of individual dwellings. *Koto* are defined strangely in traditional lore as "the first places which were inhabited by men where magicians and men with supernatural powers ruled". In Malay the original meaning of the word seems to be a fortified settlement.

Taking up this issue of *koto* as early settlements Idris Jakfar in an interesting paper entitled "*Pemerintahan Desa di Kerinci*" ("Village Government in Kerinci") presents an elaborate scheme showing how all contemporary villages in Kerinci originate from six early settlements which he names. His information is drawn from his own research into the oral traditions of villages in Kerinci, and my own limited experience of trying to elicit accounts of the origins of communities suggests that indeed in many places there is an accepted historical tradition of remote origins from an early settlement. Furthermore, although Idris Jakfar does not mention this, most of these traditions relate that the early communities sprang up as a consequence of mythical heroes coming into Kerinci and mating with preternatural wood spirits (*mambang*) whom they encountered there. Morison gives a detailed example of one such tradition in relation to the origins of Hiang where the hero with the Hindu name of Indrajati weds a jungle spirit. Another point to be noted is that all the original settlements named by Idris Jakfar are located on the hillsides above the valley, which suggests that the earliest form of agriculture practised was not lowland rice cultivation, but some sort of swidden

farming.

Idris Jakfar does not, unfortunately, describe the way in which the original communities expanded but simply lists those villages which subsequently grew up. There is, however, a good account by Bernelot-Moens (*Adatrechtbundel* XI:150-154), a Dutch official, who did investigate this subject soon after the Dutch took control of Kerinci. The following description is taken largely from his report which is confirmed by my own research.

As a family which had settled in a small cleared area grew, more rooms were added on the side of the original dwelling until one had a long-house structure inhabited by several families all of whom were descended from a common ancestress. The overall authority in the long-house rested with the most senior male known as the *nenek-nanak*. When the land immediately surrounding the long-house was no longer capable of sustaining the growing community which was now known as a *lurah*, it was decided that the extended family should split up and part go off to another area and there found another *kampung*. (Bernelot Moens uses *lurah* to describe the political community of a geographical unit which he calls a *kampung*. This use of the terms may not be altogether accurate but for the present purposes we will stick to it.) Although this new *kampung* would be under the authority of a separate *nenek-nanak*, it would nevertheless be subordinate to, and recognise the authority of, the original parent village. Thus a number of off-shoot villages would be formed. If one designates the parent village A these might be labelled A1, A2, A3 etc. As generations succeeded one another the importance of the links between the parent village and the offshoots diminished and they only became significant on ritual ceremonial occasions. Each of the new communities was, then, politically more or less autonomous.

At the same time as this political fragmentation was occurring, however, the original *kampung* might be growing in size in a different manner. Parallel to the long-house of A another family might establish itself. The street separating these houses would be about 8 metres wide and would be known as a *lurung*. Thus a new community, B, would spring up and expand with offshoots B1, B2, B3 etc. Later other families might arrive and set up in the same way and so within the same small area one would find long-houses belonging to different families, up to about four or five in number. Each family or descent group would be politically autonomous under its own *nenek-mamak*. The settlement where they all resided was known as a *dusun* or, according to Bernelot-Moens, a *negeri*. Describing the relationships between the *nenek-mamak* of the groups whom Bernelot-Moens calls *Depati* he writes: "The *depati* concerned themselves only with the importance of their own fellow members; whenever differences, however, arose between

the members of different *kampung* of the same *negeri*, or whenever something of communal importance had to be discussed, then the *depatis* came together and held a meeting: a *rapat*."

The parent village and its various offshoots might also form a loose federation known as a *mendapo* the nominal control over which was in the hands of the senior *Depati* of the parent village. Sometimes, however, offshoot villages had been founded as a consequence of disputes in the original community in which case the new *kampung* which had split off wished to sever all its ties with the parent village and would ally itself to a different confederation. In these cases genealogical links were soon forgotten, and even in those circumstances where relations between parent and offshoot villages were good, there seems to have been little attempt to cement those ties by preserving genealogical knowledge which would enable families to specify how they were related to a common ancestress.

By agreement between the *mendapo* the hills and mountains near each *mendapo* were considered its territory for the exploitation of its inhabitants. The lowland area was also divided out among the *mendapo* and the boundaries between them formally established. The overall consequence of these arrangements, then, is that one finds named villages (*dusun*) which have an allotted territory within a confederation. Within each *dusun* one finds a number of unrelated descent groups which reside in long houses in different areas of the village arranged in parallel rows. Some descent groups may be larger than others depending on which settled first in the village and on demographic factors of expansion. Although matters of communal interest will often bring the *nenek-mamak* of the groups together, in practice each group retains a great deal of autonomy. Interference from the council of elders is not tolerated with good grace in the internal matters of the descent group and the authority of the parent village or the *mendapo* head is minimal.

This, then, is a general picture of the way in which settlements in Kerinci have developed. Next, I want to turn to discuss to what degree the growth of Pondok Tinggi conforms to this pattern. But before I do this I want to give some details of the history of the contact between Kerinci and Jambi which will explain some otherwise puzzling features of the political organisation. We know that in historical times, c.1650, emissaries came from the royal court at Muaro Masumai (the present day Bangko) and tried to arrange political links with Kerinci. Subsequently there appears to have been contact between the princes (*pangeran*) at Muaro Masumai and several villages in Kerinci. Letters from one or two of these princes still exist carefully preserved by villages. From the tenor of these letters it appears that the

Jambi princes were constantly attempting to establish some sort of authority by fiat in the area; de facto they had very little control over what went on since Kerinci was too remote for them to be able to exercise any force over the area. One way they did set about creating the trappings of a feudal relationship was by the granting of honorific titles to the village elders. The idea seems to have been that the giving of a title gave the Jambi princes some sort of legitimate authority over the village elders and made the latter beholden to them. At the same time an attempt was also made to give a more tangible expression to this relationship of dependency by requiring villages to pay tribute to the Jambi princes, but the evidence suggests that although there was an occasional levying of such tribute, this never occurred on a regular basis. The feudal relationship was, then, mainly fictive. In some matters, however, villages appear to have been quite willing to play upon the Jambi claim to overall authority, particularly when it came to inter-village disputes, and there is evidence of Jambi princes settling such disputes as recently as the end of the nineteenth century. The Sultans of Indrapura also tried to claim some sort of authority over that area of Kerinci which lay to the west of the lake, but they appear to have had even less success than their Jambi counterparts, although, again, villages were occasionally quite happy to use this claim as a strategy in winning support in inter-village feuding.

In addition to awarding titles to village elders, the Jambi court also seems to have put the status of the confederations on a more formal basis. The very word *mendapo* for example seems to have originated from the Javanese speaking Jambi court and is cognate with the Javanese word *pendopo*. Jambi thus recognised a number of official *mendapo* confederations at the heads of which were representative elders all with elaborate Depati titles. Furthermore, among these *mendapo* some were given specific duties in relation to official visits from Jambi princes to Kerinci. Thus the Sungai Penuh confederation was known as the *Pegawai Raja Pegawai Jenang* (Officers of the King, officers of the Rank of Jenang) and its duty was to see to the provisions of the Jambi party when it arrived in Kerinci. Since royal visits were, however, rare, the title seems to have been largely honorific and designed principally as part of the ideological superstructure to put the elders into a position of psychological dependence. A further aspect of this imposition of authority was the attempt to superimpose elements of Jambi culture on Kerinci. The most obvious example of this is the injunctions found in some of the surviving letters to villages that they should be orthodox Muslims and not follow pagan practices. What is, however, of more relevant concern to us here is the establishment of a royal domain within Kerinci. This seems to have been done by the promulgation of prescriptions which again appear in the letters and which have become incorporated into the oral traditions. This

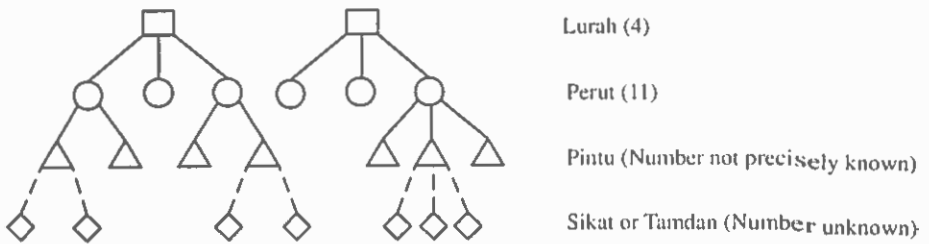
is the likely explanation of the following passage which we find in one account. "Royal territory: public roads, the banks behind a bathing place, the place of a public well, the jungle which has not been allocated". The first three categories always appear to have been part of the common domain and some authorities in fact suggest that when a similar designation of royal territory (*tanah raja*) exists in Minangkabau *adat*, *raja* does not have the denotation of royal, but in fact means simply public. ¹ My own feeling is that at least as far as Kerinci is concerned what was taken to be the common domain in the period before Jambi influence became established, was later redefined and given its present formulation as part of the general attempt to gain a cultural hegemony.

Let us now return to a discussion of the territorial development of Pondok Tinggi. According to traditional accounts the village was founded when a man from Sungai Penuh named Sutan Kamat moved up the hill breaking with the Sungai Penuh community perhaps as a consequence of a quarrel. Sutan Kamat was from the *lurah* of Rio Sangaro, although it is not clear whether the name of the *lurah* had been established before he moved to Pondok Tinggi or after. The place where he set up his house subsequently became known as *larik dahot*, the inland or uphill row. Even today members of Rio Sangaro wherever they may now reside always refer to themselves as people from *larik dahot*, since the identification of the descent group with a particular territory of residence is still strong. The three other *lurah* settled in different areas of the village, and again there was the tendency to refer to the *lurah* by the name of the row where they originally settled. Rio Mandaro established itself in *larik tengah* (middle row), Rio Pati in *larik umoh* (house row) and Rio Temenggung in *larik temenggung* (temenggung row). Each of the *lurah* preserved its own traditions and sense of separateness, despite the fact that there appear to have been alliances between, on the one hand, Rio Sangaro and Rio Temenggung, and on the other, between Rio Mandaro and Rio Pati. There is considerable debate about the nature of these alliances and the status of the individual *lurah* vis-à-vis one another, but the details of the historical origins of the founding of the *lurah* are now so obscure - and one gets the impression that they have been deliberately obscured in the past precisely to prevent questions of seniority being raised - that it is difficult to reconstruct the precise way in which the village expanded.

It is clear, however, that as membership of the *lurah* increased in size as a consequence both of natural demographic growth and immigrant families from other villages being allowed to settle in the community, the *lurah* began to disperse and construct long houses in new *larik* not far from the older settlements. At the same time there occurred a process of genealogical segmentation. How this segmentation was carried out is a matter of

conjecture, but the structure which exists today can perhaps best be represented by the following diagram.

Diagram 1. Descent Group Segmentation in Pondok Tinggi



All the *lurah* consist of three *perut* except Rio Temenggung which contains only two. The traditional designation of village government refers to the Depati Sebelas Perut (the Depati of the Eleven Perut), and this suggests that each *perut* is headed by a Depati and is to be considered a relatively autonomous unit. It is always, however, conceded that within all four *lurah* is the *perut* which is entitled *perut panjang* which is the senior *perut*. At the next level down there are *pintu*, but these do not have any generally recognised names attached to them and are occasionally referred to by geographical phrases, the *pintu* below the mosque, for example, or by reference to people, for example, the *pintu* of Depati Hamid. In this last instance it seems that there is a tacit acknowledgement that *pintu* are corporate units represented by a Depati, and there seems indeed to be a fixed number of *pintu* in each *lurah* (although there was some disagreement among my informants about this). There were said to be ten *pintu* in Rio Sangaro, ten in Rio Mandaro, ten in Rio Pati and five in Rio Temenggung. Below the level of *pintu* there is occasionally mention of *sikat* and *tandan*, the metaphor being drawn from combs of bananas, but these do not seem to be regarded so much as corporate political units, as individual families of a small but indeterminate size.

Although originally the new longhouse communities which were set up also consisted of members of a single *lurah*, and occasionally one still hears talk of, for example, *larik pantai* consisting mainly of Rio Pati *perut panjang* families, there has over the years been a lot of inter-mixing so that nowadays there is no ready identification possible between *lurah* and *larik*.

So far the description of the development of Pondok Tinggi conforms to the account of the establishment of villages given by Bernelot-Moens. But this only takes us up to c.1920 when all the *larik* were still clustered close

together in the centre of the village. In order to understand the present layout of the community we must follow the development of the residential area as it subsequently occurred.

As a consequence of the coffee boom of the twenties and the economic opportunities which arose at the time, several families in Pondok Tinggi became prosperous and one of the ways they decided to invest their wealth was in the construction of new houses. The area selected for development lay to the east of the village up the hill in the vicinity of the mosque. These houses stood in their own ground and were considerably larger than the small individual sections of a long-house which were the customary dwellings of families. There was, however, no intention that these houses should be reserved for nuclear families and the allocation of rights of residence followed the familiar pattern. Indeed, because the new houses were larger they often accommodated more people than the traditional section of the long-house where rights of occupancy were determined according to a person's position within the developmental cycle. The new residential area which then came into being led to people making a conceptual division between the centre of the village which became known as the 'below' area and the 'water' area where the streams ran. One expression of the demarcation of the village in this way was the rivalry between gangs of small boys representing the two different areas. And at the same time as the village was expanding up the hill, it was also being built up in the area of the *sawah* which bordered on the eastern perimeter of the village boundaries. In the latter case, however, it was principally Minangkabau immigrants who bought Pondok Tinggi land and set up houses there, creating a Minangkabau colony.

The next major phase of expansion occurred in the fifties when more of the land formerly used for vegetable gardens on the area on the other side of the stream which bordered the western side of the centre of the village came to be taken over for building purposes. Some people at this period were also moving out of the village altogether and, usually forced by straitened circumstances, were setting up house in the distant *ladang* in Sungai Jeluang and Sungai Ampoh. This was also a time when there appears to have been an exceptionally great influx of Minangkabau immigrants all requiring places to live. A large area of *sawah* was sold to accommodate this expansion and numerous small houses were built on small squares of land with the consequences that today buildings are clustered far too close to each other and give rise to grave problems of sanitation and hygiene.

The latest construction boom, coinciding with the high prices which cash-crops are commanding on the international market, and the availability of new building materials such as cement and plywood, began in the mid-

seventies and continues today. The westward and uphill expansion of the village proper has proceeded at a great pace with the same tendency to leave inadequate space between houses, and the result is that already the Desa Baru area which only came into existence in the early sixties is in danger of becoming as congested as the Minangkabau colony in the area downhill known as *Sawah*. One also notices that the construction of houses in the uphill area is no longer the exclusive preserve of villagers and that an increasing number of Minangkabau families are moving into houses there. Furthermore, even more of the *sawah* area is being built up and is being used not only for the construction of houses but for public buildings and offices which form a ribbon development pattern along the main road to Kumun. An increasing number of villagers who depend on farming for their income are deciding to move out of the village and settle in the growing communities up in the hills.

The Agricultural Land

In addition to the residential areas the domain of Pondok Tinggi like other villages in Kerinci also includes large tracts of land which are under cultivation or potentially available for further expansion. There is a lowland area and an upland area. The lowland *sawah* area of about 350 hectares extends out into the valley from the edge of the village. The boundary between it and the Sungai Penuh *sawah* is marked by several conspicuous coconut palms, and as far as I know there has never been any dispute about where the exact line of demarcation lies. The other boundary is with Kumun land to the east and this has often been a matter of contention between the two villages. The last occasion on which this led to fighting between the villages was in 1936 when the Dutch Controleur had to settle the matter. Some of the Pondok Tinggi *sawah* land has only come under cultivation within the last forty years. This was land which was previously swamp but which was partially drained during the colonial period. All the village *sawah* land belongs to individual families and none of it is common village land.

It appears that originally the lowland area was allocated among the *lurah* and then divided within the *lurah* among individual families. The details of this division are not clear today since individual plots of land have changed hands so frequently that it is impossible to reconstruct what the original arrangements were. It is said, however, that the Pancu Bo area belonged to Rio Sangaro and Jembatan Serong to Rio Mandaro. About other areas there is uncertainty. Theoretically, however, even when the land has been bought or sold, the *lurah* to which it was originally allocated still has residual rights in it. Thus in bills of sale the *nenek-mamak* (Rio Pemerintah) of the *lurah* concerned must append his signature even when the current owner and

purchaser are not members of his *lurah*. This practice is, however, frequently neglected today, but nonetheless its existence until quite recently implies that although rights of access to the *sawah* could under the traditional system change hands through gift or inheritance or pawning, ultimate rights of disposal were reserved to the *lurah*. When the new *sawah* was opened up in the Teroko area in the thirties it was first allocated among the four *lurah* and then, within each *lurah*, families were given individual strips to cultivate. It seems, though, that almost as soon as the allocations were made some of the new land was put on to the market and sold.

Land in the upland *ladang* areas was also assigned in the same way. I have been unable to establish precisely when the land was allocated but it appears to have been some time in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Again, the land has changed hands so frequently that it is impossible to deduce what the original arrangements were, but informants suggest that Rio Sangaro and Rio Temenggung shared the Sungai Jelurang land, Rio Pati was allocated Sungai Ampoh and Sungai Lindung was given to Rio Mendaro. The most recent upland area to be distributed among the villages was that of the Renah Kayu Embun plateau. When this area was opened up in the late thirties the section of land allocated to Pondok Tinggi was further distributed among whoever in the village was prepared to work the land there, and a number of people used this opportunity to clear plots of about two or three hectares.

In addition to agricultural land distributed among the *lurah*, which has now become to all intents and purposes the property of individuals and families, there are two types of land which remain the joint property of the *lurah*. The first of these is the mosque. It seems that by a curious arrangement when the mosque was completed just before 1903 it was agreed that each *lurah* should be allocated a side of the building. Thus the west side belongs to Rio Mendaro, the east to Rio Temenggung, the north to Rio Pati and the south to Rio Sangaro. The narrow strip of land on each side which runs round the mosque and is used as a cemetery is also the possession of the individual *lurah*, and so if a family wishes to have one of its members buried in the mosque yard it must first consult with its *nenek-namak* about the matter. There is a further graveyard on the perimeter of the original heartland of the village but this appears to belong to the village as a whole and unlike the case in Minangkabau there are no special *lurah* cemeteries.²

Finally, each *lurah* owns some land in the centre of the village. On these plots stand one or two rather dilapidated houses and the rent of these houses goes into the coffers of the *lurah*. This property seems to have been allocated in the early fifties and in almost all cases the arrangement seems to have been more trouble than it was worth. I am not familiar with the current

position regarding this property in all the *lurah* but I know, for example, that Rio Pati does not derive a very substantial income from the rent of its two houses, and plans to sell the land and buy some *sawah* in exchange which can be jointly worked have often been discussed. Rio Temenggung, after an initial failure with its houses has recently had built some new houses which appear to be running well. All these *lurah*-owned houses in the village are known, incidentally, as the *rumah koperasi* (cooperative houses) harking back to the popularity of the cooperative movement in the early years of the Republic.

This completes the picture of the organisation of the land within the village, but nothing has been said about the way in which definitions of territory have affected the perception of villagers of their political identity and it is this which I want to consider now.

The Political Identity of the Village

From the discussion so far about the traditional political organisation within Kerinci in general it should be clear that the villager only feels a weak sense of corporate identity uniting him with his fellow villagers. His solidarity lies in the first place with his *perut* and within this, it is his kinship obligations which determine his willingness to abide by the decision of his seniors. Outside his own *lurah* he feels no obligation, and so any joint decision of the council of elders is only acceptable if it is mediated to him directly through his *nenek-mamak* or *lurah* representative. Acting on instructions from the *nenek-mamak* he will, for example, take part in occasional communal activities such as the annual cleaning of the irrigation channels.

The sense of commitment to the village has historically been much weaker than the commitment to the *lurah*. And the idea of belonging to a confederation of villages finds even less resonance with individuals. The links with Sungai Penuh are, of course, recognised because of the close proximity of the two villages and the similarity of their institutions. In addition the ritual subordination of Pondok Tinggi to Sungai Penuh is clear at the installation of new *Depati* which has to take place in Sungai Penuh and is conducted by an official from there. This ritual has, however, little significance in so far as creating a sense of common purpose among the villagers is concerned, and there is sufficient difference to keep the villages conceptually distinct. There is, for example, a noticeable difference in the dialects spoken in the two villages. Furthermore, there seems to have been an attempt to preserve village endogamy to a certain extent, and men who come courting from the other village are not usually welcome, at least at the level of ideas expressed in half-jocular remarks. Thus although Pondok Tinggi belongs to the

confederation known as the Depati Tujuh (the Seven Depati) this means very little to most villagers.

In pre-Dutch times there appears to have been almost no conception of a common Kerinci identity, although according to the quasi-hierarchical structure organised by the Jambi court there was a council of Depati which represented the whole region. It was in fact this very lack of identity which seems to have turned the campaign against the Dutch into such a relatively half-hearted affair, since it seems that while some villages were opposed to the Dutch, others were quite prepared to welcome them. There was no unity of purpose at all. It was only during the Dutch occupation that gradually conceptions of belonging to a wider political universe than the village began to be felt at large in the society. The first step in this direction was when people learned to identify themselves in opposition to the other ethnic groups which came to reside in Kerinci. In addition to the Dutch there were the Minangkabau and the Chinese. With the Minangkabau they could feel some sort of affinity since they spoke similar languages and were both Muslims. On the other hand, the differences were also marked, and although there were one or two cases of inter-marriage the two groups tended to remain apart. The experience of politicisation, however, coupled with the influence of the new Islamic reformist movement which had spread to Kerinci by the late twenties made people in Kerinci more aware of themselves at different times not only as members of a small village, but also as part of a wider Muslim community, as Sumatrans, as people under Dutch colonial rule and, in some cases, as people of an Indonesian nation.

At the same time as the opening up of the region was bringing it out of its isolation and making people more self-conscious of their own culture, the reorganisation which the Dutch colonial authorities were conducting in order to incorporate Kerinci within the sphere of colonial administration was also causing leaders of the more important villages to reassess their relationships with the neighbouring areas of Minangkabau and Jambi. Although the Dutch had used as a pretext for marching into Kerinci the allegation that people there were giving support to Sultan Taha, the deposed ruler of Jambi against whom the Dutch were waging war at the time, it was never clear to them whether Kerinci should be considered more akin to Minangkabau or Jambi. There were arguments to support both views. Historically, there was much evidence to show that villages in Kerinci had been in constant contact with Jambi representatives for two centuries. On the other hand, the Sultan of Indrapura on the West Coast also claimed that he had a special relationship with several Kerinci villages, and certainly there were important economic and trade links between the people of Kerinci and the West Coast. It was, therefore, difficult to decide, once Kerinci had come under Dutch rule after

the brief campaign in 1903, whether it should be administered from Jambi or the West Coast. Even Snouck Hurgronje who was Adviser for Native Affairs and had played an important role in encouraging the decision to enter Kerinci was uncertain how to deal with the matter (Snouck 1965:201S-2031). When the opinion of people who were considered influential *Depati* was sounded concerning which administration they would like to come under they expressed a preference for the West Coast. Snouck who had become struck by the cultural similarities between Kerinci and Minangkabau initially supported this choice, and so Kerinci came under the administration of the Governor of Sumatra's West Coast. Within two years Snouck had changed his mind about the advisability of this decision. A report he had received from the Assistant-Resident in Kerinci suggested that the only reason why the Kerinci chiefs had opted to come under the administration of Sumatra's West Coast was that they had wanted to avoid being subject to the general head tax that was levied throughout Jambi. Furthermore, Snouck had become very suspicious of the motives of the Regent of Indrapura in claiming to have some authority in Kerinci, so arguments were brought forward for a reorganisation of provincial boundaries and in 1905 Kerinci became incorporated into Jambi. In 1919 there was, however, another shift of policy. It had proved difficult to administer Kerinci from Jambi because of the very poor state of communications, and in addition, since the setting up of the Dutch administration, economic ties with the West Coast had grown rapidly. The sensible thing to do was to bring Kerinci back into the sphere of the West Coast government which was, particularly after the opening of the road to the coast in 1922, in a far better position to manage Kerinci affairs than Jambi. So Kerinci remained part of the West Coast province for the rest of the colonial period. Although for the most part these administrative shifts made little difference to the villagers, those leaders who had been coopted by the Dutch into the system of indirect government in Kerinci were beginning to get the feel of the importance of questions of political identity, and of the implications of the various issues of government and administration for the region itself.

More important, however, than the decision about which authority Kerinci should be placed under was the organisation of the internal administration of the region. The problem which the Dutch faced was how to administer the territory as economically as possible by not over-extending the employment of members of the colonial service (the *Binnenlands Bestuur*) and relying as much as they could on a system of indirect rule which would not depart too much from the traditional political organisation of the region. Since little was known about Kerinci the first step they had to take was research into what precisely the indigenous form of government was. What the Dutch

needed to establish very early on in order to govern successfully was which individuals could be appointed as representatives who could mediate between the colonial government and the people. They found, however, that things were not so simple as they had hoped. There appeared to be no hierarchical structure of authority whatsoever, and within the villages the government appeared "republican". The Dutch had hoped that there might be an overall head of a *mendapo* confederation whom they could hold responsible if things went wrong. (*Wij wilden in de mendapo's verantwoordelijke hoofden, die men kon bestraffen als het verkeerd ging - Adatrechtbundel XI:152.*) Instead what they found was government by a council of *Depati* who acted as representatives and whose authority was limited to matters of law and arbitration.

In view of the practical difficulties of employing the indigenous system as it stood to meet their own purposes the colonial authorities decided that they would have to modify the traditional forms of government. This is not the place to go into the difficulties which arose as a consequence of their initial attempts at reform. These were premised on a poor understanding of the situation which had existed before their coming, and therefore led to numerous problems because of the unwillingness of the people generally to accept the proposed innovations. Some remarks do, however, need to be made about the general tenor of what was instituted, since although there were a number of divergences subsequently from the original scheme, nevertheless, the important changes made in relation to the structure of authority remained in force and indeed still persist. The first step taken was to divide Kerinci up into several *mendapo* confederations which became administrative districts. Eleven of these *mendapo* were traditional confederations which existed in pre-Dutch times, although it appears that only those in the south were confederations which had arisen from proper parent-offshoot village ties where one might reasonably speak of seniority. The three new Dutch-created confederations brought together neighbouring villages which were loosely connected and had had special status in relation to the Jambi court. The most important of these new *mendapo* was that of Sungai Penuh which comprised Sungai Penuh, Pondok Tinggi and Dusun Baru. At a higher level these *mendapo* were brought together into a division of Kerinci into two districts: Kerinci Ulu (North) and Kerinci Hilir (South). Although these divisions and sub-divisions went through a number of vicissitudes in the following years the principle of creating administrative districts endured, as did the partition of Kerinci into two, later three, large areas.

The drawing of administrative boundaries was not the principal problem which the Dutch had to deal with. More troublesome was the question of creating new government positions which could be assigned to people whose individual authority would carry weight in the villages across descent group divisions. This, it seems to me, is a problem which they never really resolved, and which still today causes difficulties. What the Dutch tried was to institute a hierarchy of native officials headed by a *mendapohoofd* (a *mendapo* head) under whom there would be several village heads. Thus, there would be a chain of authority which could be used for effective government. There were, however, two problems. First, this type of structure was unknown in Kerinci, and where there was an institution of senior *Depati* in a *mendapo*, he was only a *primus inter pares* and had little or no authority outside his own descent group. Villagers were not inclined to tolerate his direct interference in their affairs with good grace. Second, one of the principal reasons for setting up this native chain of administration was to expedite tax collection; and in order to encourage the *mendapohoofden* to pursue this task, a percentage of the revenue was allocated to them. Because the income derived from the position was substantial this created a great deal of rivalry among candidates for the post, and it was not always the most suitable who was elected. Furthermore, in efforts to discredit sitting incumbents there were constant complaints against them which made the business of government difficult. Various schemes were tried to overcome these weaknesses in the system, but the Dutch seem to have been unable to make the *mendapohoofd* into an efficient administrator, although as tax collector he served the administration well. One important principle, however, that was established in order to avoid rivalry for office, was that senior office should rotate among the descent groups of a village so that all would get a fair turn. This does seem to have had the effect of decreasing the intensity of the conflicts between the descent groups, although it never eliminated them altogether.

The single most significant modification which the Dutch made to their original scheme was to give more authority to the village head. At one stage it was thought that it might be possible to do away with the *mendapohoofd* institution altogether and work directly through the village heads (*dusunhoofden*), and although, ultimately, the *mendapohoofden* were reintroduced into the system in the thirties, in fact, it had become the village heads who were the most important links in the whole chain of authority. Again their position rotated among the descent groups in a village, and within the village they knew precisely what was going on and were thus able to act as effective watchdogs for the administration. Even though they, too, faced the problem of having no *ipso facto* authority outside their own descent group,

nevertheless the astute village head was always able to persuade the influential elders of the various groups of the wisdom of particular initiatives which he wished to undertake. Like the *mendapohoofd* his income largely depended on how successfully he collected the taxes. Over the years the office of village head became, then, an accepted institution within the village, and gradually the status and authority of the office holder as someone to whom an appeal could be made across descent group divisions began to be appreciated. Looking back now at the various administrative measures introduced by the Dutch, it is the establishment of the village head which stands out as the most permanent and the one which had the most far reaching consequences, since it meant a shift away from the traditional concept of the family as the source of social control over the individual to an idea of an impersonal government transcending norms of kinship.

None of the subsequent changes in the forms of administration which occurred in the years following the end of Dutch colonial rule up to the present has had quite the same impact on the cognitive world of the villager as this slow realisation of the significance of the role of this source of authority which lay outside the kinship organisation. Mention should be made, however, of the growing awareness which gained momentum at the end of the twenties of a new political identity. It was, above all, Islamic missionary zeal which was responsible for this. In the first place this meant a new orthodoxy which swept into Kerinci with the return of the young scholars who had gone to Minangkabau to further their religious education. Although they met considerable opposition on their return, and the Dutch did their best to set the more conservative elder leaders against the younger men from whom they feared political criticism,³ nevertheless, the controversy which spread throughout Kerinci awakened people to the political dimensions of their membership of a common religious community, and made them conscious of their fellowship in the national Islamic brotherhood. The setting up of Islamic educational institutions within Kerinci heightened this awareness. In many cases the zeal of the returned scholars for specifically religious reform could not be separated from their political enthusiasm which took the form of strong anti-colonialism. In the nineteenth century religious opposition to the Dutch had been directed at their being *kafir*, infidels, but this new opposition was in straightforward political terms. The Dutch were criticised because they were imperialists, exploiting the nation. This was the high-tide of pre-war nationalism in Indonesia and although in scale it evoked nothing like the strong universal anti-British feeling which the similar campaign did in India, it did at least sow the seeds of nationalist consciousness. In Kerinci, too, although most people found it hard to follow what was being said about imperialism and exploitation, at

least the idea of an Indonesian nation was beginning to filter through.

It was, of course, the years of the Japanese occupation and the turbulent revolutionary period which followed which were the crucible in which the idea of Indonesia was fired, and although there were still to be found those who were uninterested in politics and were indifferent to who was in authority, provided there was stability, most people were enthusiastic about the incorporation of Kerinci into the new province of Sumatra Tengah (Central Sumatra) in the Republic of Indonesia. Kerinci's principal economic and administrative links continued to be with the West Coast, much as they had been during the Dutch period. In the mid-fifties, however, the PRRI rebellion broke out and Kerinci was on the side of the rebels. When the rebellion was crushed there was a major reorganisation of the provincial boundaries and the people of Kerinci were asked which province they wished to be attached to. For reasons which I still do not quite understand two or three influential Kerinci figures persuaded the people that they would stand to gain more if Kerinci was taken into Jambi. As far as I follow it, the argument ran like this: if we become part of the province of West Sumatra the Minangkabau will milk us and we will get very little in return, whereas if we join Jambi we will be in a strong position within that province and can profit from it. It was a decision the wisdom of which is much discussed today. The same reasons which led the Dutch to reverse their decision to administer Kerinci from Jambi are now causing people to wish they were part of West Sumatra: economic links are still principally with Padang, communications with Jambi are difficult and the opportunities for the development of the region clearly lie in close cooperation with West Sumatra.

The consequences of these various political events which interest us here are the effect they have had on attitudes to territory and questions of political identity. Most importantly, the integration of Kerinci into a national system of government, which requires not only participation in a national scheme of administration but also in networks of education, health, law and religion, has meant that the political universe of the Kerinci villager is no longer bounded by the perimeter of the village, and this is something of which he is very aware. It is no longer possible to live in ignorance of the political administration which transcends the scheme of things traditional in village organisation, even though its day to day significance may not always be immediately apparent. Everyone is now aware that social life in the village means negotiating a course among the demands of the two systems which, although they tend to run parallel, sometimes conflict making the problem of negotiation difficult.

Merantau

One traditional institution which enabled people to accommodate the conceptual shifts which they had to make when moving from a consideration of themselves as members of a village family to citizens of a nation was the notion of the *rantau*. The *rantau* was anywhere outside Kerinci where people went to reside for varying lengths of time in order to gain wealth and experience. The idea of the *rantau* has been a common theme in recent writings about Minangkabau society (see in particular the works of Mochtar Naim) and there is no need to reiterate here the crucial significance for Minangkabau men of that experience of going away from the community. One helpful way of appreciating its importance is to consider it in anthropological terms as an important rite de passage marking the transition from youth to manhood, although the symbolic concepts according to which the experience is ordered relate less to cosmological conceptions of order than to the pragmatic concerns of earning one's living. There is, however, some difference between the position of the *rantau* in the Minangkabau conceptual universe and the Kerinci notion. For the Minangkabau it seems that departing for the *rantau* is a critical life-experience because it brings a knowledge of the wider society outside the homeland (the *alam Minangkabau*) and in this way leads one to self-knowledge, and second because it provides the opportunity of learning how to become financially independent. All this is summed up in the often quoted Minangkabau *pantun*:

Karatau madang di hulu	There are keratau medang trees upstream
Babuah babungo balon	But they are not in flower nor fruiting yet.
Merantau badan dahulu	Go off to the rantau first
Di rumah baguno balon	Before that you're no good to anyone

Merantau, then, is above all the quest for knowledge from which one returns better able to contribute to the welfare of the community of origin. In Kerinci, however, the experience has less of this spiritual connotation. As far as I can gather, the idea of going to the *rantau* here has more of the air of going on a short trading trip. All early accounts of Kerinci trading practices give the impression familiar to students of many Southeast Asian societies living in remote mountainous regions.⁴ After the annual harvest, in the slack season before planting, men go off to the coast taking jungle products, rope, earthenware pots and other items to trade for salt, iron and cloth. The intention is to make a short trading trip and return as quickly as possible to the village. In the nineteenth century the main commodities taken out of Kerinci seem to have been coffee and livestock, but it seems that sometime in the middle of that century a new impetus was given to the idea of going away. This was the desire to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Before one could go

on the pilgrimage one had to earn money to pay for one's passage etc., so this meant that first one had to find employment. This led many Kerinci villagers to go first to the Malayan Peninsula which they regarded as the first stepping stone on their journey. There they settled taking up agricultural occupations. Originally, it seems, they went only with the intention of staying as long as it took them to earn enough for themselves and their families to make the pilgrimage, but many families decided to settle in the *rantau* permanently and in this way Kerinci settlements sprang up in several places in Malaya. ⁵ The Kerinci people there still retained a strong sense of Kerinci identity and spoke the dialect of their village of origin with which they maintained close contacts. Following the traditional pattern of expansion these were offshoot villages established in the *rantau*, but despite the fact that they were remote they kept their pristine culture intact.

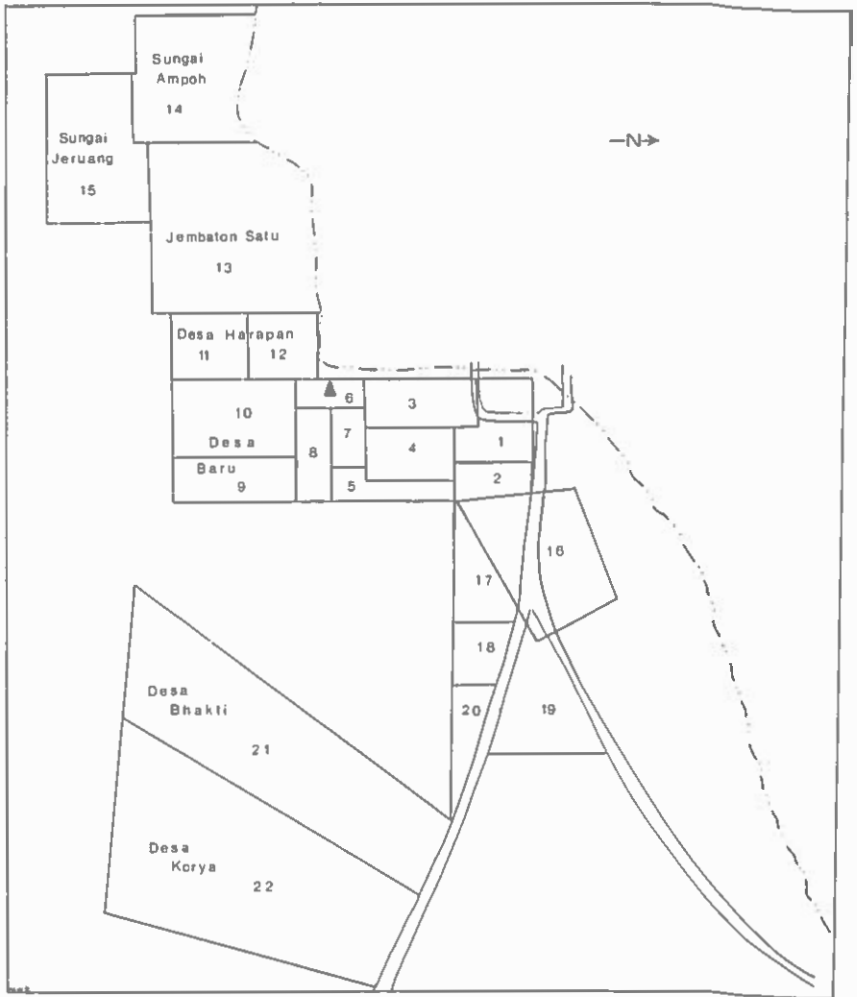
In these circumstances the attitude to the *rantau*, then, changed. From being considered as an area of the outside world where one went simply to trade and obtain necessary goods it became, in the eyes of Kerinci people, a place where one could reside semi-permanently, exploiting the resources available, but at the same time preserving community life and the whole social organisation of the village, thus having one's cake and eating it. That is, by and large, still the attitude today. The reasons for going to the *rantau* have changed and people now go less frequently to rural areas in the pursuit of wealth, and there is now very seldom a question of founding new Kerinci settlements - although this was going on, it seems, until the forties and fifties. Nevertheless, the new rural-urban drift which now occurs and which began to gather momentum in the fifties is organised, if not round the principle of the physical community, then at least around the kinship solidarity and village connections. Thus in all the large towns in Sumatra and Java where there is a sizeable Kerinci community one finds that there is a Kerinci organisation which keeps people in touch with one another, functions as a welfare institution and, most important of all, is the agency through which links with families back in Kerinci are closely preserved.

Although this establishment of village or regional organisations by immigrants coming to reside in towns is familiar from studies of rural migration almost everywhere, one or two features of the Kerinci pattern make it relatively distinct. In the first place, it is the rich who migrate. They go to further their education, and the sons and daughters of those who are relatively prosperous go off to Padang or Jakarta or to the university towns of Bandung and Yogyakarta. There they make contact with friends and relatives who are already established, and although after the first few weeks they become less dependent on these initial contacts, nevertheless, links are kept up by regular meetings and get-togethers on the occasion of religious festivals and

celebrations of one kind and another. Secondly, even though Kerinci is fairly remote there is a surprising amount of coming and going between the village and the *rantau*. Not only do students return frequently, particularly those in Padang, but relatives from the village will often visit them in the towns. This is especially the case when after completion of their education children continue to reside in the *rantau* areas, usually after entering the civil service, and bring up their families there. Grandparents are anxious to see their grandchildren and will put up with a lot of discomfort on long journeys just to be able to visit them.

In the last ten years with improvements in the economy and the development of the communications infrastructure this pattern of visiting has become exceptionally pronounced and many elderly people have travelled outside Kerinci for the first time to see their families. With such frequent coming and going a strong informal network of ties is built up and people are kept closely in touch with their families. A mother leaving the village to see her son and his children in Jakarta will be the bearer of news to other families and before her departure people will come bringing letters and small gifts which they want taken to their families. When she arrives in Jakarta much of her time will be spent going round visiting other village families to report on how things are in the village and to get a personal impression of the family in the *rantau* which she can pass back on her return to the village a month or two hence. When she does return there will be the same exchange of news and messages. In the course of a year, for example, there may be as many as six different sets of people making the journey to Java in this way. Many more go to Padang. It is easy to see how in this way the association with the village remains close and intimate.

Perceptions of the nation at large and questions of political and economic issues thus often become mediated through the personal contacts which villagers have with the *rantau* world. There are well known Kerinci figures who work in various government departments and in the fields of business and politics, and the direct and indirect contact one has with these men transforms one's knowledge of events in the outside world into something of a personal experience. New knowledge and understanding is filtered into the community through a gradual extension of people's conceptual horizons, and thus, perhaps contrary to what one might have expected, the outside world and the various ways in which it impinges on village society are not so alien and hostile in the villagers' view of things. The tradition of *merantau* which has always meant coming to terms with what lies outside Kerinci has served in this instance too as a means of absorbing new institutions while still keeping the principles of village social organisation in sight. ⁶



4. Approximate boundaries of RTs (Neighbourhoods) in Pondok Tinggi

Given this apprehension of the universes of village and nation we can now turn to see the way in which post-Independence changes in the internal administration of the region have affected physical organisation at the village level.

Contemporary Developments and Neighbourhood Organisations

The place of Pondok Tinggi in the present administrative structure in Indonesia can be illustrated by a table.

Table 9: The Administrative Structure of Government

Name of Constituent Unit	No of Such Units Incorporated in the unit above	Title of Head of Unit
Nation	-	President
Province (of Jambi)	27	Governor
Kapupaten (of Kerinci)	(6)	Bupati
Kecamatan (of Sungai Penuh)	(7)	Camat
Kemendapooan (of the 5 dusun)	(2)	(Kepala) Mendapo
Dusun (Pondok Tinggi)	(5)	Kepala Dusun
RT (Numbered neighbourhoods)	(22)	Ketua RT

The structure illustrated above is universal throughout Indonesia although there are local variations below the level of *kabupaten*. The term *kemendapooan*, as far as I am aware, is peculiar to Kerinci, although in other areas there are similar administrative units. All posts from the *camat* up are for salaried career civil servants. Those holding posts from the Kepala Mendapo down receive nominal salaries but draw most of their revenue from fees charged for official services.

In some of the larger villagers in Kerinci including Pondok Tinggi there has been recently introduced a new geographical unit of administration, the RT (Rukun Tetangga) or Neighbourhood which was set up for the first time in 1975 in imitation of the neighbourhood system which seems to have been set up in Java during the Japanese occupation. The head of the RT is the *ketua* RT who seems to be appointed by the *kepala dusun* on the basis of his being acceptable to people within the neighbourhood. It is only a part time duty and seems to be more of a chore at present than a privilege. A *ketua RT* is the first official from whom a signature should be obtained if a villager wishes to procure a document such as a birth certificate.

In Pondok Tinggi there are 22 RT which cover the area from the rice-fields right up to the *ladang* areas. The sketch map gives an indication of the way

in which the RT boundaries have been drawn up. Some of the RT's follow the traditional demarcation of old *larik*, particularly within the centre of the village; the further one gets away from the centre, however, the more RT divisions cease to represent divisions of descent group territory. RTs numbers XVII, XVIII and XIX are largely Minangkabau colonies lying on the boundary between the village and the town and few Pondok Tinggi villagers reside in them. Some areas covered by more than one RT have been given area names by villagers. For example, the area covered by RTs IX and X is known as Desa Baru. These names are of recent origin dating back not more than about fifteen years. In some cases the geographical unity expressed by the name is also the basis of an ad hoc but unofficial political unity. There is, for example, a strong sense of community in Desa Baru which finds expression in an economic cooperative organisation. This suggests that, although at first sight the RT system, organised as it is on geographical principles, may appear alien to the structure of traditional village government in Pondok Tinggi, nevertheless the idea of cooperating on the basis of common residence in a vicinity has traditional support. For the rest of this section on the concept of territory, therefore, I want to discuss neighbourhood organisation in some detail taking up some of the issues already raised and analysing to what extent organisation on a descent group principle and on a territorial principle come into conflict. I hope the general nature of the issues which arise will become clear from an extended discussion of developments which have occurred in one particular area.

The settlement of houses in the territory covered by RT XXI and RT XXII is still commonly referred to as Kampung Lereng, the name which seems to have been attached to it when a few houses were set up there for the first time in the twenties. Located on the strip between the bottom of the hillsides and the *sawah* area of the village, it appears to have been originally a grazing area for cattle, mainly water buffaloes. Another name for the area, or at least for one large part of it, is Kinun and it is widely accepted that this is a contraction of something like Ke-minum and indicates the water hole where the buffaloes were led to drink. It seems to have been a combination of demographic pressure and poverty which led people to settle there. There was insufficient room in the long-houses in the centre of the village to house growing families and the land up the hill was largely allocated to more wealthy villagers who could afford to build relatively imposing houses. The less prosperous families in the village were therefore forced to go further afield and some of them settled in Kampung Lereng, which was then still covered with undergrowth, where their modest houses would pass unnoticed. There also seems to be a tradition that a number of Rio Pati families who had come from Kemantan bringing some buffaloes also settled there.

Although the community there began gradually to expand in the following years and the hillsides came under cultivation, the growth of the settlement was in no way distinguished and the standard of life of the villagers who resided there remained below that of their kinsmen in the centre of the village. Some of the grazing area seems to have been turned into *sawah* and an effort was made to make the area nearest the village more habitable by clearing away the undergrowth. In the fifties and sixties conditions there were rather miserable: the stock of cattle had declined, and because the soil there was poor the rice fields were not very productive. A few people had begun to plant clove trees and coconut palms, but these were not yet producing. During the early sixties the PKI (the Communist Party of Indonesia) made a great deal of headway there, and a number of Kampung Lereng people became members of either the party or one of its front organisations. The taint of the PKI tended to add to the physical distance which separated the settlement from the village heartland and made people look upon Kampung Lereng with even more uneasiness. The people there were regarded as close and secretive with a generally hostile outlook towards outsiders. Of course they still maintained ties with their relatives in the village, but since they were so far from them it was natural that the first people they turned to when seeking help and cooperation were their neighbours. In this way a sense of community began to emerge and one of the principles around which it was organised was this common membership of the PKI.

When the abortive coup of 1965 occurred, the so-called Gestapu or G30S coup, many of the Kampung Lereng families suffered in the aftermath. There were, however, none of the violent killings in Kerinci which occurred in other areas of Indonesia at the time. It seems that although feelings ran high, principles of family solidarity mitigated the effects. Nevertheless, members of families were arrested and some died or were killed later in prisons in Jambi. Everyone who was a member of a family which had PKI associations came immediately under a social stigma and for a number of years following G30S they were the objects of general suspicion and found it very difficult to mix freely in society. In this situation they tended to stay close to Kampung Lereng rarely going out and devoting their energies to the cultivation of their small plots of land. Ten years later the tide began slowly to turn. G30S was receding into the past and other political issues took its place in the imaginations of the villagers. The fruit trees which had been planted so many years ago were maturing and stocks of cattle were increasing. Furthermore, new settlers had built houses in the area, and these newcomers were not from the less prosperous sections of the village but were moderately well-off and looked upon the Kampung Lereng area as potential development land. Finally, Kerinci as a whole had become remarkably prosperous in

the seventies as a consequence of the boom in cash-crops, and Kampung Lereng shared in this general prosperity. The reorganisation of the settlement into two RTs named Desa Bhakti and Desa Karya, names which it was hoped would replace the tainted name of Kampung Lereng, therefore came at an opportune time.

Most of the credit for the creation of the strong sense of community which now exists among the residents of Des Bhakti (RT XXI) must be given to the present *ketua* RT. An official in the local department of Social Welfare, he is a religious man and in 1965 in an effort to provide an alternative to PKI proposals he became the prime mover in setting up a cooperative in the neighbourhood with the intention of extricating the poorer farmers from the poverty trap. It had long been the case, for example, that when villagers came to purchase meat to celebrate Idul Fitri, the most important holiday in the calendar of the villagers, they were forced to buy on credit, promising to pay with crops which were still green in the fields. This system of purchase known universally throughout Indonesia as *ijon* ('green', thus denoting the idea of selling ripening crops) puts the farmer into a position where he is perpetually in debt, and there seems no escape, since the amount of the harvest which he retains for himself is so small that he is soon obliged to borrow again on a credit basis. One of the first enterprises of the cooperative, then, was to purchase a cow shortly before Idul Fitri and organise the selling and distribution of meat itself. When it was first established there were 17 members and by 1979 there were 77. Originally they tried to levy a contribution from members in order to build up the assets of the cooperative, but they soon ran into difficulties. It was therefore decided that instead of asking for a financial contribution they should ask members to contribute their labour and this people were willing to do. The cooperative then hired a plot of *sawah* on a share-cropping understanding and the cultivation was organised by members. In this way the funds of the organisation were built up. Slowly the welfare activities were increased: a funeral club was organised to assist with the expenses of burials; help was given to members who incurred hospital bills; seed stock was distributed to farmers. The cooperative flourished.

Cooperatives are not a new institution in Kerinci and one was in fact set up in Pondok Tinggi as long ago as 1940. None of them, however, has lasted very long, and the success of the Desa Bhakti cooperatives deserves some comment. From discussions with the *ketua* RT I got the impression that it was the close organisation of the community by leading members of the cooperative which reinforced the solidarity of members. Let me quote from my notes of an interview to illustrate what I mean.

I was discussing the failure of cooperatives in Pondok Tinggi and I remarked how after initial good beginnings they tended to founder. I asked the *ketua* RT why he thought this was and how in Desa Bhakti the impetus of the organisation was maintained. His reply was as follows. Two things were important for the success of cooperatives: *semangat* ('enthusiasm') and *jiwa sosial* ('community spirit'). If these two were present, things would run smoothly. Leadership was vital and it was necessary to ensure a continuity of young blood and enthusiasm. To do this one had to build up cadres. These cadres didn't have to be large - five people were enough. Thus there could be a turn-over of members of the organising committee without any loss of vitality. If members of the cooperative were not convinced of the importance of the enterprise then this was the fault of the organisers. It was their job to brief and educate people about the advantages of belonging to a cooperative organisation. I asked how this briefing was done. There were two ways he said: through *kelompok* (group meetings) and *langsung* (directly). By the latter he meant visits to houses on informal occasions explaining the importance of this and that venture. (One such venture, he said, was the spread of cattle rearing in the neighbourhood. Almost every household now had one or two head of cattle which they were looking after.) Group meetings were held in the *surau* (small local mosque) where people gathered of an evening and information was disseminated that way. Interestingly, he said that if people did not attend the mosque meetings for three consecutive weeks a letter was sent to them asking them to explain their absence.

It can be seen from this that a fairly tight control is kept on residents in the RT, and it must be said that this is resented by some who feel that the *ketua* RT is exceeding his authority when he puts pressure on people to attend the mosque.

One very successful organisation within the RT is the youth group known as Karang Teruna. A number of the RTs in Pondok Tinggi now have such youth groups, but, again, it seems to be this one which is the best organised. They, too, work a plot of *sawah* on a share-cropping basis and from the profits they purchase sports equipment. Volley-ball is enjoying a great vogue among the youth at the moment and every evening before *maghrib*, providing it is not raining, boys and girls can be seen playing the game on the grass court in the centre of the settlement just outside the *ketua* RT's house. The latter can often be observed using the opportunity during pauses between games to talk to youngsters. In the evenings the young people visit each

other or attend Koranic recitation groups. Again the *ketua* RT tries to maintain the spirit of the Karang Teruna group by working on the principle of cadre organisation and reliance on two or three leaders. One of the points which he was constantly stressing was the importance of education and the concomitant idea of investment in knowledge and training, since, as he put it, with the increasing pressure on land in Pondok Tinggi it was clear that in the future many people would be forced to leave farming to make a living.

What we see in Desa Bhakti, then, is a united community tightly organised within a small geographical area around the principle of mutual support. One should note that in this case the neighbourhood organisation of the cooperative preceded the establishment of the official RTs, so here, and in similar instances in other areas in Pondok Tinggi, the RTs were simply superimposed on pre-existing communities. This emphasis on vicinity rather than on *lurah* as the organising principle of a community's sense of political identity is clearly a function of the recent demographic expansion. It is not an entirely new phenomenon, since we have seen how traditionally, in the natural growth of village communities, families coming from outside may set up in the territory of an established descent group, losing their distinctiveness after a while when through fictive kinship they take on descent group membership. In the recent development of neighbourhood communities, however, we find little attempt to organise in any way according to descent group principles. Whereas previously the organisation of the work of the domestic household may have tended to encourage participation in family work groups, now the different forms of contemporary life-styles, most noticeable in the new emphasis of youth on education and recreation, have led to the creation of societies and associations which cut across *lurah* and *perut* affiliations. It is true that, theoretically, there is no reason why, for example, sports associations could not be organised along descent group lines, and indeed for a short time during the sixties they were in fact run in this way. But the difficulties of getting people together caused by families and descent groups now being dispersed over a wide area, and the conscious attempt to foster a sense of supra-*lurah* village solidarity, led to the dissolution of these associations into an overall youth association of Pondok Tinggi, the PSPT (Pemuda Setia Pondok Tinggi). This has subsequently been followed by RT youth associations which organise inter-neighbourhood sports competitions.

It would, however, be premature to say that with the declining importance of *lurah* solidarity as the organising principle of cooperative endeavours in the village that kinship attachments are also of less importance than before. For one thing there are still numerous occasions where the *lurah* does function as a corporate body, and there are *lurah* associations which hold regular

meetings. Furthermore, if we look closely at this decline in *lurah* organisation we see it has occurred principally in the sphere of government and administration, the politico-jural domain, where its authority has always been weak. Indeed, it could be argued that the decline of *lurah* authority in Kerinci commences with the consolidation of the village as the political unit of organisation. In the domain of kinship, however, which remains the repository of the culture and ensures the continuous transference of social values, the *lurah* and the segments within it provide the diachronic and supra-territorial continuity in relation to which villagers orient their lives.

In former times the institution of the *lurah* longhouse and the allocation of the land in blocks to *lurah* ensured that the territorial principle and the kinship principle were inseparable in the organisation of the society. When the expansion of the community led to a more dispersed pattern of settlement and the concept of *lurah* territory began to disappear as agricultural land and houses became alienable to people who were not of one's family, then the two principles became divorced. Despite their separation, however, and despite what appears to be the increasing encroachment of organisations of a neighbourhood character upon what might formerly have been considered the preserve of the *lurah*, territory and kinship as principles of organisation are complementary rather than antagonistic notions.

Summary

We have seen how the growth of knowledge in the community during the past seventy five years has led to new perceptions of the place of Kerinci within the nation and a new self-awareness on the part of villagers. We have seen, too, how this knowledge was transmitted by educational and administrative institutions which when they were first introduced seemed, at least at first sight, to be quite alien to the traditional structures of village organisation. Nevertheless, we noted that some of the strangeness of this experience was dissipated by its being accommodated under the old tradition of *merantau* which had always mediated between the village community and the outside world.

Of the institutions which have recently been introduced, some have no counterpart whatsoever in the traditional structure. This is particularly the case in the sphere of government with the establishment of a hierarchy of authority which has replaced the old village government which was conducted by a council of elders (Depati). The appointment of a village head has been particularly significant in this respect, and although this position of authority is now accepted by villagers, it is noticeable that in Kerinci - and elsewhere one suspects in Sumatra - the *kepala dusun* does not have the same absolute

command of the village situation that his opposite number does in Java. To that extent the relatively egalitarian structure of descent group government has refused to yield entirely to the new national framework of administration.

On the other hand, those forms of neighbourhood cooperation which have become consolidated under the RT system have met with less resistance. This is because even though it would appear that formerly cooperative endeavour was organised around principles of kinship, there was a strong territorial element even in the traditional arrangements and people have always been disposed to seek out systems of mutual assistance premised on residence within small designated areas.

The immediate consequence of the new administrative structure has clearly been to weaken descent as a principle of organisation, although even this statement must be qualified by admitting that such a principle never appears to have been strong. Descent always seems to have been significant only in relation to relatively small groups of families who can trace common ancestry back to not more than four or five generations in the past. If one has this limited notion of descent in mind it would appear that the contemporary arrangements so far discussed, in so far as they do not involve questions of government and administration, seem to have had little impact on family institutions and the structure of relations between close kin.

We have not yet, however, discussed the recent history of property in the society and the way in which new legal concepts of ownership and land transactions have evolved. It is here, above all, that we would expect contemporary ideas to have struck at the very root of relations among kin. Property, one might argue, is the nodal point at which political institutions and the affective structures of kinship meet, and any changes here should have dramatic consequences for traditional concepts of the rights and obligations determined by kinship. It is to a discussion of property, then, that we now turn looking first at the changes in the law which have affected questions of ownership.

Notes

- 1 For a brief discussion of *tanah raja* see von Benda-Beckmann 1979: 141f.
- 2 Recently, however, there have been plans afoot to establish them since the old cemetery is now being used for the construction of a village hall.
- 3 An instance of this is found in an incident mentioned in Prins (1960:21) where a Muhammadiyah figure was expelled from Kerinci in 1937.

- 4 I am thinking here particularly of societies like the Iban which has a term, *bejalai*, to refer to this temporary migration.
- 5 The Malayan census of 1931 which included a category of Kerinci immigrants recorded that there were 3,437 Kerinci people in the Peninsula (Vlieland 1932:167) but this seems to be an understatement (ibid.: 76).
- 6 I would not, however, want to over-stress the importance of *merantau* in the rapid incorporation of the society in the international socio-economic order as I think Kato (1978) does. The latter's argument runs the risk of appearing naively functionalist and Kahn is rightly critical of it by implication when he argues against appeals to ethnicity as a satisfactory conceptual term in an analysis of change (1980b:6). Nevertheless, just as one must admit that not all bourgeois are Flaubert, one must make proper allowance for what appear to be cultural singularities.