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In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 112 (1956), no: 3, Leiden, 285-290

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A NOTE ON KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE ON PANTARA

In 1955, while doing anthropological research on Sumba, in eastern Indonesia, I met an old man who was a native of the island of Pantara.¹ He was born in Maluku in the province of Bernusa but had lived on Sumba since 1938. He had married a woman from a coastal community of Endeh fishermen and spoke their language and some Malay, in which we conversed: his own language he at first professed to have forgotten, and he clearly had difficulty in remembering specific features of it. He was about seventy years old, was uncertain in his speech and not always clear in his mind, but he was the only native of Pantara whom I met and I took the opportunity to learn even a little about Pantara social organisation. I questioned him on two occasions, and on each he amused the onlookers and irritated himself by contradictions and lapses of memory. Eventually he protested that he feared to lead me into error and courteously refused to continue. There were still matters that I wished to elucidate, but I did not see him again and soon afterwards left Sumba. The reports of such an informant on random cultural features might well be not worth recording, but the data on kinship and marriage which he finally presented are of such a systematic character and so clearly typical of a particular form of social structure that I regard them as reasonably reliable.

The people of Pantara, by his account, are organised on the basis of exogamous patrilineages. This agrees with Vatter (1923: 269), who writes that the village was organised into patrilineal clans (*vaterrechtliche Sippen*). Their number was always very small, seldom more than three or four: frequently the village was identical with the clan. He says that the clan was formerly exogamous, but that this stipulation had almost entirely lapsed, and that in its place there was strong local exogamy. My informant said that marriage within the village was possible but not within the lineage.

¹ Spelt "Pantar" in the maps. The stress is on the first syllable.

Marriage is with the mother's brother's daughter: "this is obligatory" (*tidak bisa tidak*). Residence is patrilocal.

The kinship terms, as far as I could ascertain them, are listed below. The list is not complete, but the important structural features are nevertheless clear. I have marked the relevant terms as indicating marriageable (✓) or prohibited (×) women. There are certain constant qualifiers: *ka^su*, small; *aring*, younger; *kakang*, older; *kavae*, female; *kalake*, male. *Geriang* means "to cherish, guard", as of a foster-child. *Opung* for "grandchild" refers to a certain collateral grandchild, as will become clear below, not to a lineal grandchild.

grandparent	pukong	
father	ama	
mother	ina	
father's elder brother	ama kakang	
father's younger brother	ama ka ^s u	
father's sister	bapa kavae	×
mother's elder brother	bapa kakang	
mother's younger brother	bapa ka ^s u	
mother's brother's wife	bapa kavae	×
mother's sister	ina	×
elder sibling	kakang	
younger sibling	aring	
mother's brother's daughter	kavae	✓
mother's sister's daughter	kakang/aring	×
mother's brother's daughter's child	anang	×
mother's sister's daughter's child	anang	×
father's brother's daughter	kakang/aring	×
father's sister's daughter	kavae	✓
father's sibling's child's child	anang	×
child	anang	
son	anang kalake	
daughter	anang kavae	
brother's son	anang (a. kalake)	
brother's daughter	anang (a. kavae)	×
sister's son	anang	
sister's daughter	kavae	✓
brother's daughter's daughter	kavae	✓
sister's son's son	opung	
sister's son's daughter	kavae	✓

grandchild	(opung)	
wife	kavae	
husband	kalake	
wife's brother	opung	
wife's sister	kavae	✓
wife's father	bapa	
wife's mother	bapa (b. kavae)	×
husband's father	ama (a. geriang)	
husband's mother	ina (i. geriang)	
elder brother's wife	kakang kavae	
younger brother's wife	aring kavae	
sister's husband	opung	

The terms are typical of exogamous patrilineages. Cross-cousins are distinguished by special terms. All women descended from the father's sister's marriage — and, classificatorily, presumably all women of the lineage into which she married and of the succeeding generations — are classed together as *kavae*, wife. The wife's brother and his son's son are both *opung*, but the wife's brother's son is *anang*. This is not an anomaly, an exception to the principle of the unity of the lineage, but is a point of evidence for a system of marriage which the other terms indicate.

What is of particular interest, and the reason for the publication of this note, is that the kinship terminology is characteristic of a system of symmetric connubium, a regular set of affinal alliances through the reciprocal exchange of women. This is indicated by the following terminological equivalences:²

mother's brother's wife - wife's mother
 mother's brother's daughter - wife
 mother's brother's wife - father's sister
 wife's mother - father's sister
 wife's brother - sister's husband
 father's sister's daughter - wife
 father's sister's daughter - wife's sister.

I regret that I cannot record certain other important equivalences which are characteristic of such a system: viz. wife's brother's wife -

² For statistical correlation of such terminological equivalences with father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter marriage see Murdock (1949: 172-3).

sister, and wife's brother's daughter - sister's daughter (though I think they may safely be inferred). However, the crucial equivalences exist in the terminology and are inexplicable except in a system of symmetric connubium.

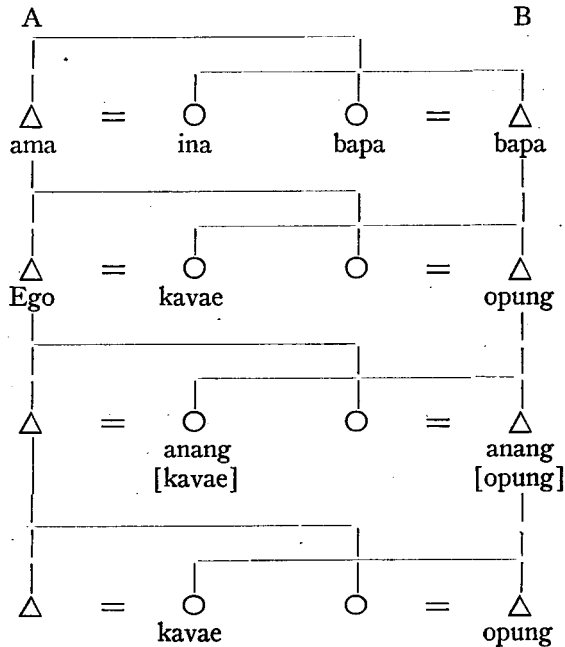


Fig. 1. PANTARA SYSTEM OF SYMMETRIC CONNUBIUM.

It can now be seen that the wife's brother's son is *anang*, child, because he is also the husband of Ego's daughter. The latter does not lose her status of daughter, and her husband, though of a different lineage, is terminologically assimilated to her: it is probable that he is *opung* until he marries her. Similarly, the wife's brother's daughter, who is *kavae* as a member of her natal lineage, becomes *anang* on marriage to Ego's son. This is entailed by the terms *ama* and *ina* used by a woman to her husband's father and mother, and confirmed by the term *anang* for a structurally equivalent person, the mother's sister's daughter's daughter.

Vatter gives an interesting piece of additional evidence: "The amount of the brideprice depends on the sum previously paid for the bride's mother. For the eldest daughter an equal amount is demanded: for the younger daughters it is less' (1923: 269). This points to the

regular exchange of women between lineages by father's sister's daughter marriage. Symmetric connubium involves not only a reciprocal exchange of women and bridewealth, but an interchange in alternating generations: lineage A pays bridewealth for a woman from lineage B, and in the next generation gets bridewealth from B for the woman's daughter. The Pantara stipulations about bridewealth have a significance in such a system which they do not have if it is assumed that the daughter marries into another lineage than her mother. The force of Vatter's evidence can be illustrated by an ethnographic parallel from another part of eastern Indonesia. In the district of Kodi, on Sumba, where bilateral cross-cousin marriage is practised, an argument advanced against marriage with the father's sister's daughter is that the mother's husband (or his lineage) will demand exactly as much for his daughter as he paid for his wife. The calculations involved in making precisely equal payment, and the fault-finding comparisons of the items of the respective marriage payments, are regarded as obstacles to the marriage and to good relations between the lineages and villages concerned. Mother's brother's daughter marriage is governed by other conditions and is not thought to entail comparable difficulties.³ Pantara marriage was described by my informant as with the mother's brother's daughter, but it is also simultaneously with the father's sister's daughter: structurally, the relations between the families are characterised by this mode of marriage and are subject to the difficulties connected with it.⁴ If these difficulties are similarly conceived on Pantara then it is clear why the eldest daughter's bridewealth is regulated as it is. It is also understandable that the bridewealth of the younger daughters should be free of this condition. When the eldest daughter has been married in an equitable exchange the marriages of the younger ones are contracted in a

³ Details of these and related features of Sumbanese social organisation will appear in future articles and monographs. For a general consideration of the structural features of such a situation see Lévi-Strauss (1949: ch. 27).

⁴ By "families" I mean those groups within the lineages which pay and receive the bridewealth. The point I wish to make is that as far as these bridewealth-exchanging groups are concerned the affinal relationship may be characterised by the features of Lévi-Strauss's "cycle court", even though formally the relationship between the lineages is symmetrical and the exchange of women reciprocal. The fact that my informant defined preferred marriage as with the mother's brother's daughter is no obstacle to this view. Given that mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter are structurally equivalent, either may be selected as declared preference. The reasons for the actual choice call for particularistic analysis which is not our concern here.

relationship free of the debt for their mother: they initiate new exchanges.

Another point of interest is that according to Vatter girls used to be betrothed a few days after birth, and that "to assure and confirm the alliance a part of the bridewealth was already paid down" (1923: 269). No precise inference can be drawn from this, but it is evident that affinal alliance was of a considerable importance consistent with a system of connubium.

The possibility of the existence of symmetric connubium on Pantara should be of particular interest in connection with the study of dual organisation in the islands of this area of Indonesia.⁵

One critic, whose opinion I respect highly, has maintained that the uncertainty of the source — which I have been careful to describe — makes any inference precarious. I admit that at the time I did not analyse the terminology fully and did not realise that it indicated a system of symmetric connubium. But neither the terms nor their distribution nor the marriage rules resemble significantly those of any Sumbanese society or of the Endeh communities. The informant was apparently undesirous and clearly incapable of constructing a deceptive scheme. The information is presented here as I received it. Criticism meant to deny value to the information would, it seems, have to be more extraordinary than the inference drawn from it.

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REFERENCES.

Note: Certain references concerning Pantara which I should have liked to consult were not available during the writing of this article, particularly those in *De Indische Gids* and the *Natuurkundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*.

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⁵ It would be particularly interesting to see if traces of symmetric connubium exist on Alor. The dialects spoken over the greater part of Pantara belong to the Alor group (Vatter 1923: 277). Kinship terms recorded from coastal Alorese are practically identical with those from Pantara: viz. father, *ama*; mother, *ina*; brother, *kakan*; child, *ana*; son, *ana kalaki*; daughter, *ana kawai*; husband, *kalaka*; wife, *kawai* ("De eilanden..." 1914: 94).