

Possible Models of Early Austronesian Social Organization

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THIS PAPER IS addressed to a consideration of the possibilities of comparison.¹ Since current typologies of contemporary Austronesian societies influence our judgment on possible earlier forms of Austronesian society, it is these typologies and the bases for them that require examination if we are to make any attempt at the construction of prior structures.

In this paper, I wish to take as my starting point the important article on early Austronesian social organization by Blust (1980). Instead of discussing specific aspects of the argument of this paper, on which I have already commented at some length (Fox 1980), I wish to consider some of Blust's underlying assumptions. My intention is to consider alternative assumptions.

With this as background, I then wish to indulge in a hypothetic consideration and manipulation of possible models of Austronesian social organization. Other disciplines regularly have recourse to such theoretical exercises and I would argue that in the present, and as yet early, stage of our understanding this is a particularly salutary procedure. To avoid an element of vacuousness, however, I propose to rely on an early, but nonetheless still useful, paper by Kroeber (1919) on kinship in the Philippines as an appropriate source for constructing a model that can be compared with models drawn from evidence of societies in other parts of the Austronesian world.

Finally, I would like to draw on evidence from a larger, ongoing study of the social organization of societies in eastern Indonesia that would tend to support a "genetic" or historical linguistic model of the kind envisioned in my earlier discussion. I admit that, at this stage, my discussion of this evidence is both premature and partial and I offer it only to solicit comment and further discussion.

BLUST'S FORMULATION OF CONTRASTING MODELS

At the outset, I should make clear that I entirely agree with Blust's theoretical intentions. If ever we are to be able to make any valid statements about earlier forms of Aus-

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tronesian society, the data for these statements will have to be based on careful historical linguistic research. However, the construction of a model of any earlier “kinship system” will require more complex methods than are used to reconstruct individual linguistic terms. The model, to be at all convincing, must represent a coherent whole; in other words, all of the individual terms must relate to each other to create and encompass a recognizable semantic system. A mere collection of candidate terms will not satisfy the requirements for a model. With a coherent terminological system one can begin to venture generalizations about possible earlier forms of social organization using evidence from contemporary systems.

My disagreement with Blust concerns the degree to which it is possible to generalize about forms of social organization on the basis of incomplete data for the construction of a model of the Austronesian terminological system. Inspired, it would seem, by current anthropological typologizing (which, in my view, is inconsistent, inadequate, and thoroughly confusing), Blust poses the issue of construction as if it involved a choice between two opposed hypotheses—a “prescriptive alliance hypothesis” based on terminological lineality with some corresponding form of lineage or clan system, and a “bilateral hypothesis” which assumes bilateral descent and terminology with an absence of clan or lineage structures. The first of these hypotheses derives, either directly or indirectly, from Dutch authors such as van Ossenbruggen, van Wouden and J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong; the second is based on views developed by Kroeber, Loeb, Murdock, Milke, and, to some extent, Goodenough.

The problems with this dichotomy are various. The procedure conflates terminological questions with typological questions involving descent/nondescent constructs. The study of Austronesian terminologies is still in its early stages and is greatly complicated by the enormous number of systems that are to be found in the Austronesian world. Similarly, the present state of classifying or typologizing Austronesian societies on the basis of descent or nondescent criteria has produced such a proliferation of competing forms of classification that one recent commentator, who is much concerned with these issues, has described it as “an insurmountable problem” to extricate his own comparative analysis of Borneo societies from the “present anthropological discourse of classification,” though he himself regards these classifications as “demonstrably inadequate” (Appell 1976:11).

To conflate the questions of terminology and descent typology and generalize from one to the other is a perilous undertaking and tends to converge on other false dichotomies. Thus, for example, (symmetrical) prescriptive alliance does not necessarily require descent groups whereas descent groups of a sort can and do occur in societies that have bilateral cousin terminologies. Moreover, in relying on Murdock, who uses cousin terminology as the criterion for his typologies, Blust does not seem to recognize that many Austronesian terminologies may have lineal features in ascending and descending generations and more or less bilateral features in ego’s generation. Although it seems perfectly valid to compare different features of Austronesian terminologies, it is dubious to base the classification of entire social systems on a limited set of these terminological features. Such classifications should instead take into account whole systems.

Blust’s concern is to proceed to construct a model of proto-Austronesian social organization. To the anthropologist, the more interesting question would be to construct the prototerminologies of various Austronesian subgroups and, by this means, begin to chart the developments in social organization that occurred with the expansion of the Austronesian speakers. An investigation of this sort could possibly be linked with the evi-

dence of prehistory and might better illuminate historical developments that have occurred among the Austronesian populations.

In this, however, there might be a temptation to assume a stage-like progression in “types” of social organization whereas it is more likely that, within each subgroup of Austronesians, the systemic properties of available terminological resources were played out over time. Thus, given common features in these terminological resources throughout the Austronesian world, similar “types” of social organization may have developed separately. Such similar “types” of social organization can be seen in Madagascar, the Philippines, eastern Indonesia, and the Pacific. It is not these particular “types” of social organization but rather the systemic interrelations among them within and across subgroups that may illuminate the Austronesian past. At a minimum, discussion must take place at two levels—at the level of the “features of the terminological system” and at the level of the “types of social organization” that have developed based on these features.

Seen as systems, all Austronesian terminologies show certain irreducible features: (1) a clear and consistent demarcation of generations; (2) the prominent use of gender as a classificatory feature (which in many systems is extended to include the gender of speaker); and (3) the use of age, minimally in the form of relative age (elder/younger) but also in terms of birth order (firstborn/last born). Virtually all Austronesian systems appear to involve an elaboration and interplay of at least these three features. Although the terms used may be quite different and unrelated, the processes of category creation resemble each other since they involve similar operators. Thus, for example, what is perceived as “lineality” can be seen as the interplay of these same features.

Madagascar offers an exceptional area of study in this regard because the Austronesian languages of the island are closely related and terminological systems have developed in similar ways but separately using slightly different terminological elements. Thus, for example, the Sakalava and also the Masikoro form their category for mother’s brother by linking the category for mother (*rene*) with the gender category for male (*lahi*): *renylahy*, i.e., ‘male mother’ (see Dahl 1980:232). The Merina rely on a similar process but use the word for brother (*anadahy*), which is itself a composite term based on features of gender and generation, to modify the word for mother (*reny*): *anadahin-dreny*, i.e., ‘mother’s brother’. The Tsimihety use another set of operators by applying age (elder/younger) categories to a term that must have been used earlier for father, thus forming *zama-be*, *zama-hely*. Similar processes that have occurred in other areas of the Austronesian world can easily be included in this same series of transformations. The Savunese of eastern Indonesia, for example, link the gender category for male (*mone*) to the term for father (*ama*) to form their category for mother’s brother, *ama kemone*; whereas the Tikopia appear to add an age feature to the term for mother to form their category for mother’s brother, *tuatina*.

The point is that one can legitimately study terminologies as systems in the various regions of the Austronesian world with the reasonable expectation that a variety of possibilities will have developed over time rather than a single type.

PLAYING WITH POSSIBLE MODELS

Kroeber, in his early article on kinship in the Philippines (1919), attempted to reconstruct what he described as the ancient Philippine kinship system. Having done this, he then went on to speculate on the “correspondence of institutions” with the particular

kinship reconstruction that he had posed. This paper is a useful starting point because it carefully delineates the steps by which one ought to proceed from linguistic construction to statements about social organization.

Kroeber's paper is also interesting by its seeming incompleteness. There appear to be remarkable gaps in the reconstruction as a system. Thus, for example, Kroeber gives no cousin terms, and he explicitly asserts that no "general word" is reconstructable. This would seem to be an important point. On the other hand, recognizing the requirements of constructing a system, Kroeber has indicated where several such terminological constructions would be required. As Blust has rightly indicated, given what we presently know of Philippine languages, Kroeber's work is far from being an adequate historical linguistic construction.² Yet I would argue that it was Kroeber's awareness of these obvious inadequacies that allowed him to focus on the systemic aspect of the problem of construction that he faced.

If one were to venture some sweeping characterizations of Austronesian terminologies, one would have to begin with a generalization that began with Morgan, namely, that Austronesian terminological systems are all generationally organized. With the generational organization of Austronesian terminologies, neither ascending nor descending generations are particularly elaborate. Frequently, in fact, the generations above and below the first ascending or descending generations are identical or possess nearly identical single-term reciprocals. First ascending and descending generations embrace a greater number of possibilities, but these possibilities are relatively limited and can hardly be described as particularly elaborate.

What is significant, however, is the considerable elaboration and relative diversity of terms in ego's generation, including alternative forms, in both the so-called consanguineal as well as affinal components.³ Taking a lead from Kroeber, one might therefore speculate that—apart from the relative age categories of elder/younger (possibly also birth order categories) and the gender categories of male and female—ego's generation, at an early point in the development of Austronesian systems, was an open field—a kind of "sign zero"—that offered a multiplicity of possibilities.

With this view in mind, Kroeber's reconstruction of the ancient Philippine kinship system seems particularly significant. The terminology in simple notational form⁴ is as follows:

1. Apo	PP, CC	(Alternative: Nono)
2. Ama	F	
3. Ina	M	
4. Bapa	FB, MB, WF, HF	
5. ***	MZ, FZ, WM, HM	*Unconstructed possibility
6. Kaka	eSb ('elder sibling')	
7. Ari	ySb ('younger sibling')	
8. ***	Sb	*Unconstructed probability
9. ***	'brother-in-law'	*Unconstructed possibility
10. ***	'sister-in-law'	*Unconstructed possibility
11. Asawa	Sp ('spouse')	
12. Anak	C, BC, ZC, CSp	(Alternative: Wata)
13. ***	'parent-in-law'	Unconstructed but see 4 and 5

Allowing for the various unreconstructed forms that Kroeber obviously felt were required to create a system, there still remains a notable absence of terms for male and female in ego's generation—terms which because they are often general terms for 'man'

and 'woman' are not always considered as 'kinship' terms. I would consider such terms to be the "missing elements" in this reconstruction.

Since this reconstruction is based on various Philippine terminologies (Kroeber relied on ten systems that were available to him at the time), it is clear that it also relates to quite a number of cognatically organized societies of the Philippine kind. However, to make a point that Kroeber also stressed about the "simplicity and adaptability" of this system, I would like to show how these same elements could give rise to a differently structured system. To do this, I propose to compare Kroeber's reconstruction with the present terminology of the Atoni of West Timor, whose society is organized on the basis of symmetric alliance. My object is to indicate systemic possibilities, rather than any necessarily close historical relations among these particular Austronesian groups.

The terminology of the Atoni, using the same notation, is as follows:

1. Na'if	PF, SpPF	Second Ascending Generation Male
2. Be'if	PM, SpPM	Second Ascending Generation Female
3. Upuf	CC	Second Descending Generation
4. Amaf	F, FB, MZH	
5. Ainaf	M, MZ, FBW	
6. Babaf		
Babaf Mone	MB, WF, FZH	
Babaf Feto	FZ, WM, MBW	
7. Ba'ef		
Ba'ef Mone	MBS, FZS, WB, ZH	
Ba'ef Feto	MBD, FZD, BW, HZ	
8. Mone	H, HB	
9. Fe	W, WZ	
10. Tataf	eB, FeBS, MeZS, WeZH (m.s.) eZ, FeBD, MeZD, HeBW (w.s.)	
11. Olif	yB, FyBS, MyZS, WyZH (m.s.) yZ, FyBD, MyZD, HyBW (w.s.)	
12. Fetof	Z, FBD, MZD, WBW (m.s.)	
13. Nauf	B, FBS, MZS, HZH (w.s.)	
14. Anah		
An Mone	S, BS, WZS	
An Feto	D, BD, WZD	
15. Moen Fe'u	ZS, DH, WBS	
16. Nanef	ZD, SW, WBD	

This terminology, despite its different structural specifications, possesses many of the same elements as Kroeber's system:

PHILIPPINES		TIMOR
1. Apo	::	Upuf
2. Ama	::	Amaf
3. Ina	::	Ainaf
4. Bapa	::	Babaf
5. Kaka	::	Tataf
6. Ari	::	Olif
7. Anak	::	Anah

If one considers Kroeber's lexically unconstructed possibilities, this comparison can be further extended. Thus, for example, Kroeber envisaged the possibility of a parallel female term to correspond with the male term, *bapa*. Timorese has such a term but creates it simply by adding a gender modifier to the basic term, *babaf*; hence *babaf mone*:

MB; *babaf feto*: FZ. Kroeber also envisaged the possibility of a separate term for 'parent-in-law'. Since the Timorese terminology is a two-line terminology based on symmetric alliance, the parent-in-law specification is covered by *babaf* as well; thus *babaf mone*: MB, WF, FZH; *babaf feto*: FZ, HM, MBW.

Precisely the same remarks can be made about Kroeber's unconstructed terms for 'brother-in-law' and 'sister-in-law.' Timorese has a single term, *ba'ef*, for both categories. *Ba'ef*, like the term *babaf*, is modified by the gender categories for male and female; but as in the case of *babaf* it includes specifications consistent with the structural characteristics of a two-line terminology, hence: *ba'ef mone*: WB, ZH, MBS, FZS; *ba'ef feto*: BW, HZ, MBD, FZD.

The simple point to be made is that, with virtually the same terminological resources, it is as easy to construct a two-line symmetric terminology as it is to construct a cognatic terminology. The fact that such two-line terminologies occur in various areas of the Austronesian world from Madagascar to Fiji is a further indication of this same point. This would also suggest that the tendency to emphasize a typological dichotomy between lineal/prescriptive and cognatic forms of Austronesian social organization may be misleading, since both can equally be derived from approximately the same matrix.

This also raises the interesting question of indeterminacy. The construction of terms in a protolanguage is done by relying on the methods of historical linguistics. Individual terms may be reconstructed on the basis of demonstrable phonetic changes. Where cognate terms share a common or similar meaning it is possible to assign this meaning, or at least a closely related one, to the protoform. Where, however, a number of terms cohere as interrelated elements of an unknown system, constructing that system requires more than the establishment of the system's individual elements.

Take, for example, the terms *ama/amaf* and *bapa/babaf* from the preceding comparison between Timor and the Philippines. Assume that protoforms can be constructed to represent these terms. In such a case, it would be relevant to the construction of a proto-system to know whether *ama** included only the specification of F, or whether it also included the specifications of FB and MB as well; similarly it would be essential to determine whether *bapa** included only MB or both MB and FB. Moreover, it would be useful, though perhaps not essential, to establish which of these terms possessed the specifications of FZH and/or MZH.

Historical linguistic methods may enable us to determine the elements of a prototerminological system, but these same methods may encounter a form of indeterminacy in constructing a system from such elements. If, as I have tried to indicate, it is possible to construct either a two-line terminology or a cognatic terminology from much the same array of terms, then it may be possible to construct either system for proto-Austronesian. Judging between these alternative constructions would then become a major problem. The only alternative to this situation would be, as I have already argued, to proceed by stages to construct the protosystems for various subgroups of Austronesian, and from these protosystems to proceed cautiously to a more amplified understanding, realizing that in the end there may always be a problem of indeterminacy. Some indication of this alternative way of proceeding may be judged from the following tentative discussion of terminological evidence from eastern Indonesia.

TERMINOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM EASTERN INDONESIA

To this point, I have only been concerned with systemic possibilities. Since such possibilities may have been realized repeatedly at different stages of the Austronesian expan-

sion and in different areas, they cannot be used as unassailable evidence of historical development. Other forms of evidence are necessary to begin to make statements about possible historical developments. In this regard, the Austronesian populations of eastern Indonesia (particularly the diverse societies of the Moluccas and Lesser Sunda Islands) are often cited as crucial to the study of ancient forms of social organization. In my view, the societies of eastern Indonesia are indeed crucial to a consideration of the total picture of Austronesian development, but they cannot be regarded as some kind of privileged field with fossilized forms of ancient social organization.

In recent years, there has been a great deal of field research in eastern Indonesia and the results of this field work are only beginning to become available. Here I shall confine myself to commenting on some of the evidence that has begun to emerge on the development of kinship terminologies in this region of the Austronesian world.

Essential to any terminology with lineal features is the minimal requirement of some lexical means of distinguishing MB from F. Unlike the Philippines, for example, where this distinction does not always occur, virtually all of the societies of eastern Indonesia make this distinction in their terminologies. Beyond this, one might also expect to find an equivalent distinction made between MZ and FZ, but if the $F \neq MB$ distinction is made this second distinction is not essential, and in some societies it does not occur.

The following is a list of the terms for F, M, MB, and FZ from a number of societies of the region:⁵

	F/FB	M/MZ	MB	FZ
1. Tanembar	Ama	Ina	Memi	Abe
2. Kei	Yaman	Renan	Memem	Avan
3. Kedang	Ame	Ine	Epu	Aqe
4. Pantar	Ama	Ina	Bapa(ng)	Ina(ng)
5. Alor	Ama(ng)	Ina(ng)	Amang Pukong	Inang Pukong
6. Kemak	Amar	Inar	Amar Nai	Inar Kii
7. Mambai	Ama	Ina	Nai	Kai
8. Atoni	Amaf	Ainaf	Babaf (Bab Mone)	Babaf (Bab Feto)
9. Helong	Ama	Ina	Baki	Eto (Be)
10. Roti	Ama	Ina	To'o	Tè'o
11. Savu	Ama	Ina	Ama Kemone	Ina
12. Sumba (Kam)	Ama	Ina	Tuja	Mamu (Kia)
13. Sumba (Lauli)	Ama	Ina	Loka	Tiama
14. Sumba (Mem)	Ama	Ina	Mbapa	Tiama
15. Sumba (Kodi)	Bapa	Inja	Loka	Kia
16. Sikka	Ama	Ina	Pulame	Na'a
17. Tana Ai	Ama	Ina	Mame	Be
18. Ende	Ema (Baba)	Ine	Mame	No'o
19. Manggarai	Ema	Ende	Amang	Inang
20. Ngada	Cema	Cine	Pame (FB/MB)	Pine (FZ/MZ)

Several observations can be made about this array of terms. The first and most obvious is that *ama/ina* for F/M is general, and since these terms can be constructed for proto-Austronesian we can regard them as a basic resource of a protosystem. The second observation is that there is no single term for MB. One possible conclusion that could be drawn from this is that no single specific term existed at an earlier stage of development, and that various groups in eastern Indonesia independently developed their own particular designation for MB. This would account for the variety of terms for MB that are to be encountered in the region: *memi*, *epu*, *nai*, *babaf*, *baki*, *to'o*, *tuja*, *loka*, and so forth.

Here, however, one can venture a further observation. A similar process seems to be involved in the creation of many of the terms for MB. In a number of cases, the term for MB appears to be derived from the word for F to which has been added some elevating or honorific modifier, making the MB a special kind of father: *amar nai*, *amang pukong*, *ama kemone*. In some cases, the modifier appears to replace the term that it modified and becomes the full designation. Thus the Mambai, who are neighbors to the Kemak, seem to have dropped the form *amar nai** and use simply *nai* (*nai* being a term for 'senior male' throughout the Timor area). Similarly, among the Savunese the formal designation *ama kemone*, 'male father', becomes in everyday usage the single term *makemone*. Possibly also Kedang, *epu*, could have derived from *ame pu* thus putting it in the same set as Alor, *ama pukong*, and Sikka, *pulame*. Following essentially the same linguistic process, one might also speculate that Helong, *baki*, derives from *ama baki** or *bapa kai**.

Particularly instructive are the Manggarai, Ngada and Ende terms. All three have similar forms for F—*ema/cema*—but different terms for MB, all of which also appear to derive from *ama/ame*. In the Ngada case, the transition to a lineal system is incomplete in that *pame* designates both the MB and the FB, making it very similar to a large number of systems of the sort one generally encounters in the Philippines and Sulawesi. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that virtually all of the processes of development observable in the case of the category for MB are also observable for that of FZ, though the process of linealization has not advanced as far.

The form—*babaf/bapa/bapang/mbapa*—occurs several times in this array, suggesting that the term may originally have begun as an alternative term for F or as a term for FB and was extended to the MB. An alternative interpretation might be that this form was an earlier term for MB which was lost in several languages and replaced by various other terms.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps the best way to consider possible models of early Austronesian social organization is in terms of a developmental process. The evidence would suggest that the earliest forms were generationally organized with distinctions based on relative age and gender (including sex of speaker). This matrix had the potential to generate a great variety of systems, including systems with varying degrees of lineality. The regional development of lineal systems may have begun to develop in the southern Philippines and become more elaborate in the Indonesian islands, particularly in eastern Indonesia. Such lineal systems require only relatively minor modifications in the first ascending generation but are often accompanied by a considerable development of distinctions in ego's generation. In any particular area, however, the permutations are such that a whole range of possibilities are to be found, from cognatic to lineal.

NOTES

1. An earlier draft of this paper was prepared for and delivered at the 12th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association held from 26 January to 1 February 1985 at Peñablanca, Cagayan, Philippines. I wish to express my thanks to all of the delegates who kindly commented on my earlier draft, and, in particular, to Harold Conklin who was the discussant on the paper at the Congress.
2. I am particularly grateful to Blust for providing extensive comments on an early draft of this paper in his letter of 15 February 1985. Our disagreements over particular issues regarding Austronesian kinship and social organization, which often derive from differing disciplinary perceptions, are part of a continuing dialogue that we have had since 1975.

3. The common division of Austronesian terminologies into consanguineal and affinal components, which also derives from Morgan, is in my opinion an artifact of the genealogical method commonly used to study these terminologies rather than an inherent feature of the systems themselves.
4. This notational form is, for the most part, self-evident in that it uses simple letter abbreviations for common English words. Only a few notations require explanation: 'Z' is used for 'Sister'; 'Sb' for 'Sibling'; 'm.s.' for 'male speaker'; 'f.s.' for 'female speaker'; 'e' for 'elder'; 'y' for 'younger'. Compounds follow similar lines: 'PP' is used for 'Parents' Parents or Grandparents'; 'CC' for 'Children's Children or Grandchildren'; 'MB' for 'Mother's Brother'.
5. It should be noted that this list is a regional arrangement rather than a proper linguistic subgrouping arrangement of particular languages.

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