

ROXANA WATERSON

Houses, Graves and the Limits of Kinship Groupings among the Sa'dan Toraja

Introduction

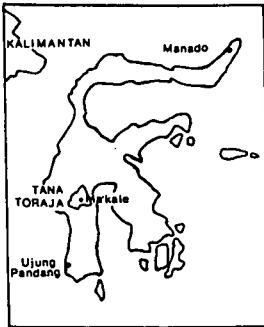
Quarrels are always instructive for the outsider attempting to learn the rules of another culture. It is in the breach that the force of a norm can most clearly be seen, and the arguments brought forward during disputes may illuminate principles which are otherwise taken for granted, receiving little direct expression. Disputes thus help one to grasp what are the limits either of acceptable behaviour, or of some structure or institution which in other ways may not be clearly bounded. Cognatic kinship systems in island Southeast Asia have precisely this unbounded character, and I have previously argued (Waterson 1986) for the need to focus in such cases on the strategic nature of kinship relations in everyday life, rather than on formal models – what Bourdieu has called ‘practical’ as opposed to ‘official’ kinship (Bourdieu 1977:37). The Sa'dan Toraja of highland South Sulawesi provide an excellent example of such a bilateral kinship system, one which is highly flexible in practice and where the edges of groups or individual commitments cannot be precisely defined. In my own fieldwork I found that disputed claims to membership of kinship groupings, focused around houses of origin (the *tongkonan*) and their stone graves (*liang*), helped me to understand how kinship actually functions for the Toraja, as a set of ideas by means of which they shape their social world.

Houses and kin in Tana Toraja

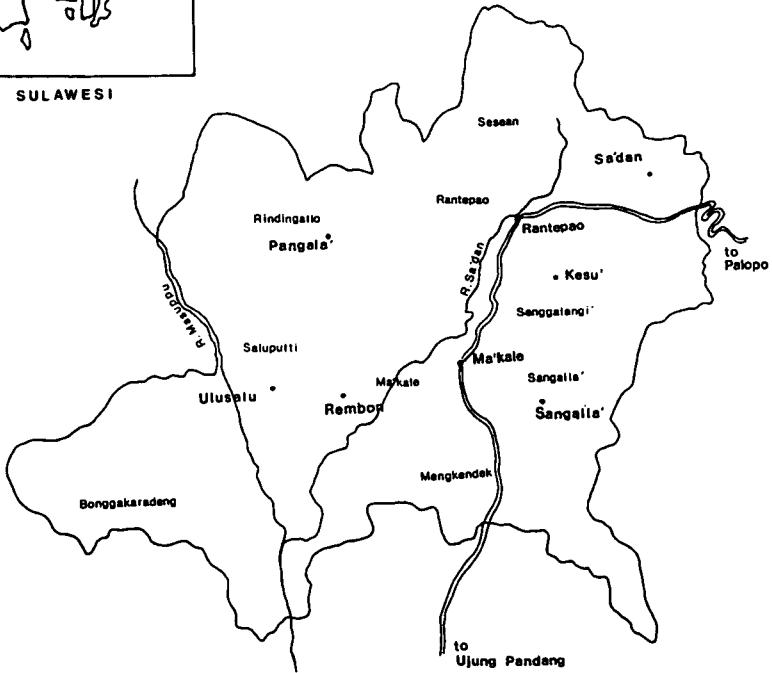
The Sa'dan Toraja number around 370,000, living in the *kabupaten* (or sub-provincial unit) of Tana Toraja, in the mountainous northern region of South Sulawesi.¹ They are largely subsistence farmers, cultivating rice on

¹ My fieldwork in Tana Toraja was carried out over a period of 18 months in 1977-79, and again for 8 months in 1982-83. The first fieldwork was funded by the then Social Science Research Council of Great Britain, the second by a Cambridge Uni-

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SULAWESI



Names in bold print are those of towns and villages
 Names in light print are those of *kecamatan* (districts)
 == = main road

Map of Tana Toraja

rain-fed hill terraces, with cassava and maize as secondary staples. They also grow coffee, cloves and, in recent years, cocoa as valuable cash crops. The biggest changes in Toraja social and economic life over the past two decades, however, have come from funds channelled home to the highlands by the many Toraja migrants working elsewhere in Indonesia or beyond. Tourism has, since the 1970s, become a factor of growing importance in the Toraja economy. Today, according to the 1990 census data, more than 80% of Toraja have converted to Christianity, while only a dwindling minority of just over 35,000 (approximately 10%) maintain the indigenous system of beliefs and rituals now known as *Aluk to Dolo*, or 'Way of the Ancestors'. Toraja society has traditionally been hierarchically organized in ranks of nobles, commoners and (formerly) slaves, though the status system has been particularly affected by the introduction of new wealth in the past two decades and is currently in a state of flux.

For the Toraja, as for many other Indonesian kinship systems, the tracing of descent through certain houses, regarded as origin sites, is a distinctive feature.² Both men and women trace ties to a number of houses where their parents, grandparents and more distant ancestors were born, maintaining links throughout their lives with a number of different houses. After marriage, a couple should contrive to pay equal attention to the houses of both spouses, attending rituals and contributing sacrificial pigs or buffaloes, and assisting with rebuilding projects. Theoretically, a contribution to rebuilding may be as small as a single cent or a grain of rice, which would be inserted by the carpenters in a joint between pillar and beam, as a token affirmation of membership. In practice, it is the expense, particularly of rituals, which tends to limit the extent of anyone's active ties to origin houses. Although in theory the links to houses are almost innumerable, those that most people can name are the houses of their own parents and grandparents, and those of their spouse's parents and grandparents. There are pronounced differences, however, between the noble and commoner ranks, both in the style of their houses and in their interest in genealogy. In the western region of Saluputti, where I did my fieldwork, it was only carved noble houses that were dignified with the name *tongkonan*, while the origin houses of other families were referred to simply as *banua pa'rapuan* (*banua* means 'house', while the word *rapu* and its derivative *pa'rapuan* refer to a bilateral kinship grouping, or part thereof, tracing its

versity Evans Fellowship and a British Academy South-East Asian Fellowship. I gratefully acknowledge the support of these bodies, and also of LIPI, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, which kindly gave their permission for the research. I visited Tana Toraja again in May-June 1994. I am grateful to James Fox for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

² I have examined the case for seeing Indonesian societies as 'house societies', in Lévi-Strauss's terms, in Waterson 1990, 1993a, and 1995. Toraja architecture is richly illustrated and discussed in Kis-Jovak et al. 1988.

descent from a particular house and its pair of founding ancestors).³

The house, therefore, is both a material structure and a group of people, those who claim descent from it. How and when those people choose to define themselves as a group is restricted to specific occasions, however. These are the arrangement of ceremonies (such as mortuary rituals), inheritance, or the rebuilding of a house.⁴ The membership of one house intersects with that of another, but since this membership is activated only at intervals, it is feasible to maintain ties with more than one house. The definition of a *rapu* is contingent, and there is no simple way of tracing the boundaries either of a house's descendants or of an individual's allegiances. When a decision is taken to rebuild an origin house, any particular point in its genealogy (i.e., a specific married couple) may be selected, and all the children of that ancestral couple will then be regarded as founding heads of *rapu*. The costs will then be divided between the descendants of each of these. For the rebuilding of large and important aristocratic houses, a point several generations back in the genealogy may be selected, and contributions gathered from hundreds of descendants. For smaller *banua pa'rapuan*, a group of siblings may treat themselves as heads of *rapu*, and manage the rebuilding among themselves, with the help of contributions from their adult children. But if the siblings are too few, then they may draw in their cousins by going back another generation and choosing their grandparents as the starting-point. On some other occasion, a different ancestral couple may be selected.

It can be seen that *rapu* have no fixed composition or leadership, and in daily life these groups are of little relevance. A much more prominent feature of the way kinship is talked about on a day-to-day basis is the inclusive use of kin terms, expressive of a desire to embrace as many people as possible with the terms *siunu* ('siblings') or *solata* ('one of us'). Also characteristic is the way relationships, such as that between cousins, are spoken of in terms of links between houses. In some cases the precise genealogical links may even be forgotten, but people know which origin houses they share and say that 'their houses join' (*sikande tongkonan*) or that they are 'siblings within the house' (*siunu lan tongkonan*).

All the same, there are occasions when the limits of this cosy inclusiveness will be put to the test. Acknowledged membership of a house may bring entitlement to inheritance or to a share in the control of *tongkonan*

³ Tammu and Van der Veen (1972:469) give the primary meaning of *rapu* as 'a kinship grouping'. When speaking of *rapu*, Toraja frequently draw comparisons with a stool of bamboo (*tallang*), whose rapidly growing stems sprout from a single clump. *Rapu tallang* denotes both a bamboo clump and an ideally large family group, multiplying and expanding like the bamboo. The use of botanical metaphors when talking about kinship is widespread in Indonesia (see, for example, Fox 1971).

⁴ The main way in which a house acquires the status of origin house for a particular family is through successive renewals, so that houses are often rebuilt long before this is strictly necessary from a functional point of view.



Ceremony held to celebrate the recent rebuilding of an origin house (*mangrara banua*) at Tallung Lipu, June 1994. House descendants bring pigs in decorated litters to reaffirm membership; it is on occasions like these that challenges to membership may sometimes arise. Descendants of this house are Christian, though the ritual retains most of the traditional elements.

property, or *mana'*. Most *tongkonan* hold rights in certain resources such as bamboo and coconut groves; some also have rice lands attached to them. A rice field might be left to the *tongkonan* by a childless person, for example. *Mana'* lands are worked by the family actually resident in the *tongkonan*, who have the right to the produce, except when it is needed to meet general expenses such as the cost of renewal of the *tongkonan* roof. Some families use it to help educate whichever children of the *rapu* seem most likely to benefit from schooling. The extent and importance of *mana'* lands are difficult to assess accurately, since there seem to be wide variations from region to region. I was told by a wealthy nobleman of the central Nanggala district that all *important tongkonan* had *mana'*; he didn't know about ordinary ones. But in Saluputti district, many origin houses had little or no *mana'*, or in some cases, where they had had *mana'*, it had been redivided among the descendants. It is hard to say, therefore, to what extent the existence of such property may tempt people to assert dubious claims to *tongkonan* membership. Aside from land actually designated as *mana'*, however, there are lands that are passed down by inheritance from parents to children, and which in a looser sense are also thought of as the inheritance of descendants of a particular house. Several informants proposed that a stronger attraction than that of land was exercised by the prestige to be gained from association with a wealthy or influential *tongkonan*. But others pointed out that the remembering of genealogies is bound up with inheritance claims, and that to be a true *tongkonan* member you needed to know the names of rice fields as well as of ancestors. One acquaintance suspected a relative of manipulating or embroidering his version of the genealogy of a house from which they were both descended with a view to making such claims. Another, who lives in town, was quick to demonstrate his knowledge of the names of rice fields and their owners around his village of origin when another man attempted to stake a claim to a rice field inherited by his mother.

A demonstration of claims to membership is most likely to occur in the context of rituals, when sacrificial pigs are brought by the guests and offered to the hosts. If accepted, they constitute a debt that must be repaid on the occasion of some future ceremony. It is on these occasions that a contentious claim may be made, and a pig may be rejected. An examination of such cases enables us to observe how the boundaries of house membership are from time to time called into question, as well as the strategies by which individuals may attempt to establish claims.

Tactical uses of kinship and the staking of claims

Membership of a *rapu*, however defined, is a matter which only becomes important in the context of inheritance, or of the fulfilment of one's duties towards a *tongkonan* – such as contributing to its rebuilding and attending the ceremony with which the completion of rebuilding is

celebrated.⁵ It is at a ceremony that a 'false' claim to membership may first be attempted, or a legitimate one challenged. Only true descendants of a *tongkonan* have the undisputed right to bring a pig to its house ceremony; though affines may attend, this is chiefly an occasion for the *pa'rapuan*, and pigs which they may bring are called by a different term and create a different kind of obligation. If, however, one brings one's pig as a sign of one's descent from the house in question, one must be prepared to recite one's genealogy if questioned. If one cannot thus prove one's descent, the pig will be refused. If it is accepted, then one's membership is also an accepted fact; at a later date one may cite this as proof of it. This is only one example of the part played by ceremonial pig-giving in both establishing and maintaining relationships; such prestations become part of the history of a relationship, passed down eventually from generation to generation. If the exchanges were to cease, this would effectively put an end to the relationship. Though people said that the rejection of pigs at ceremonies was quite a common occurrence, most also added that they would feel ashamed to press any claims of association with high-ranking or wealthy *tongkonan*, even those to which they were distantly related, for fear of appearing to be seeking their own advantage.

Often the claimant may be someone who is (or claims to be) a man's illegitimate child (*anak tepo*) who has never been officially recognized by the father during his lifetime.⁶ In the past, men of noble rank quite commonly contracted a number of unofficial liaisons, sometimes with women of slave or commoner rank. They might or might not recognize their offspring from these unions. If the father did recognize his child, then the child enjoyed some right of inheritance, and it is not unheard of for a favoured *anak tepo* to become a leading and influential member of the father's family. For the most part, however, if an *anak tepo* is not acknowledged during the father's lifetime, it will prove difficult to uphold any claim. This has not prevented a certain land-hungry noble of Saluputti from claiming, with an eye to heritable property, that he is the *anak tepo* of three different fathers, though he was something of a local joke as a result.

Sometimes, direct descendants of a house may be obliged to acknowledge a link of which they were previously ignorant; in other cases I was unable to ascertain whether a claim was in fact a legitimate one, which was

⁵ When pressed to confirm that these were truly the only occasions on which the defining of *rapu* became important, Bua' Sarungallo of Kesu', an expert in cultural matters, said simply: 'What other occasion could there be?'

⁶ *Tepo* means literally 'a quarter'; the term *anak tepo* implies that a child has two fathers. According to the principles of bilateral descent and inheritance, children are considered to derive their substance equally from their mother and their father, but in the case of *anak tepo*, pater and genitor are separate individuals. More unusually, if a woman already pregnant by her first husband should divorce him and marry again before the child is born, this child, too, is regarded as *anak tepo*. *Anak tepo* generally have a lesser right of inheritance from both fathers.

being rejected by the acknowledged descendants for fear that claims would be made on family property later. The three instances described below illustrate this.

Case 1. At a house ceremony held in Tumakke, Talion district, in the 1970s, a man from the neighbouring village of Tapparan brought a pig which his hosts tried to refuse. However, he was able, by reciting his genealogy, to establish the validity of his claim as a descendant of Tumakke, and so the pig had to be accepted.

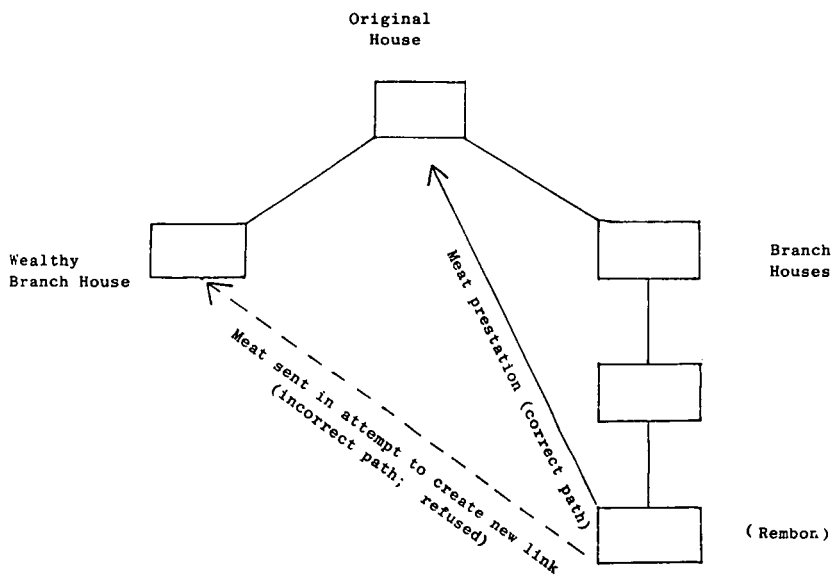
Case 2. Sambayang of Menduruk once brought a pig to the house ceremony of a *tongkonan* in Buttang, Malimbong district. His claim to a genealogical link with this house was challenged by the hosts. Although he recited his genealogy, the details were disputed and after some argument the pig was rejected.⁷

Case 3. A man named Amba brought a pig to the house ceremony of a *tongkonan* called Lombok. The head of the family, Allo Rerung, refused it, and demanded that he recite his genealogy. Amba claimed to be the *anak tepo* of Allo Rerung's grandfather, Saranga', but he had no witnesses. Amba's grandchild was married to a grandchild of Saranga', so there was also an affinal tie. Finally, in order to avoid embarrassment, Allo Rerung accepted the pig as an affinal gift, casting Amba in the role of *baisen* (a term used by parents-in-law to address each other), but rejecting his claim to be a descendant of the *tongkonan*.

This particular manipulation of the ceremonial context (if such it was) involves an attempt to gain recognition of a consanguineal tie in place of an already existing affinal relationship. I have no idea whether the claim to be an *anak tepo* in this case was valid. It may have been; when some elderly men I knew of passed away, their relatives were surprised by the numbers of hitherto unsuspected children of informal liaisons who turned up to introduce themselves and pay respects to the dead. On the other hand, one might have expected the information to have emerged already at the time the marriage of the two grandchildren was proposed. However, we shall see that some other cases also appear to involve attempts to transform one kind of link into another.

Case 4. A couple who had been childless for many years sought the help of a *to minaa* (a priest of the Aluk to Dolo religion). He performed a ritual for them, after which they succeeded in having a daughter. A child born in these circumstances would be regarded by the *to minaa* almost

⁷ Although I knew Sambayang during the period of my initial fieldwork in 1978-79, he was unfortunately deceased by the time I was told of this incident on a return visit, so I was unable to check his side of the story. According to genealogical data which I collected, however, he *would* have been able to trace descent from Pasang, recognized to be the most important origin house in Malimbong, but not direct from Buttang, although the two houses have been several times linked by intermarriage. The tie he was attempting to trace was therefore probably too lateral to justify his claim to be a descendant of the Buttang *tongkonan*.



Diagram

as his own child. Later, a second daughter was born, and the couple then sought to strengthen the link with the *to minaa* by betrothing this girl to his son. Since all *to minaa* are descended from aristocratic houses, an unspoken but nonetheless clearly understood motive was also that of forging a tie with his prestigious *tongkonan* through marriage. The *to minaa*'s son, however, later broke off the engagement, objecting that the relationship was too close for a marriage, for 'her sister is like my sister'. He was by then studying at the university in Ujung Pandang, and may have had another girlfriend there; at any rate, his argument was accepted by both families. This saved another embarrassment, for, on the strength of the engagement alone, the girl's parents had been proposing, as affines-to-be, to attend the *to minaa*'s coming house ceremony and bring a pig. This they were not entitled to do, but if the pig would have been accepted, this would inevitably have initiated a lasting relationship of mutual obligation. The *to minaa* was thus saved from this dilemma, for he had been unwilling either to accept the pig or to hurt the parents' feelings. The couple thus failed in their bid to transform a relationship of ritual 'kinship' into an affinal one.

Another type of attempted transformation of relations may occur between origin houses that are related to each other as branches of a particular founding *tongkonan*. The fortunes of such branch houses can rise and fall rather rapidly over a generation or two, and if one branch becomes more successful and wealthy, the incentive to forge closer ties with it will be stronger, as the following case indicates:

Case 5. In the village of Parinding, Malimbong district, stands an old aristocratic *tongkonan*. This house has many branches, one of which is established next door to it. The latter house has become much wealthier than the founding house, its members now controlling extensive rice lands in the neighbourhood. Relationships between old origin houses and their branch houses are maintained through an exchange of meat at ceremonies, but the meat must always follow a vertical path from the branch houses up to the original house, which may redistribute to other branches; it should not pass horizontally between branches which are not directly related to each other (see diagram). On one occasion, a distant relative, Rembon, tried to bring a pig to a house ceremony being held by the wealthy branch *tongkonan*. This was refused, but after Rembon's death, his relatives again tried to send the head of a sacrificial buffalo to the same branch *tongkonan*, instead of to the founding house, as was proper. This was viewed as an attempt to establish a claim on the lands of the branch *tongkonan* by claiming descent from this house rather than the original one. The next step, I was told, would have been to demand a piece of land in recognition of the claim. It so happened that the original house, which should have received the meat, was temporarily unable to do so because it was under reconstruction, and, until all the ceremonies connected with this are completed, it is *pemali*



Cliff graves (*liang*) at Lemo. Each grave belongs to a particular origin house and is used over generations. Since individuals have ties to more than one origin house, they may also have rights in several *liang*. Disputes sometimes occur over the choice of a burial site; placement in a grave where one does not have rights is regarded as a serious offence.

(prohibited) to accept meat in connection with mortuary rituals. In the end, the meat was simply left for two days until it had gone rotten, and then divided up among the other villagers.

Several of the above instances show people attempting to transform one kind of relationship into another, or conversely, resisting such redefinition. But it can also happen that different branches of a *tongkonan*, all with genuine genealogical ties to a house, enter into competition and attempt to out-manoeuvre each other for the honour of rebuilding the house, as in the following case:

Case 6. Sarapang (a pseudonym), a man from Tikala district, has rights through his grandmother in a *tongkonan* at Tallung Lipu, north of Rantepao. When his branch of the family wanted to rebuild the house in the 1970s, the family which was resident there refused to take part, and the timber collected for the work was left to rot. Some time later, another branch of the family decided it wanted to carry out the rebuilding, and although Sarapang's family was informed of this intention, the resident family did not tell them later when the consecrating *merok* ceremony was to be held. Sarapang was told of it by some other relatives, however, so he came to the ceremony, bringing a pig. This the resident family attempted to refuse, but he succeeded in forcing them to accept it. A granduncle had told Sarapang that he had property rights in some dry garden land, inherited from an ancestor of this same house. After the ceremony he tried to make a claim to this land, but the *tongkonan* residents refused it, maintaining that the land was joint property of the *rapu* and was not for division.

In this case it would appear that one group of descendants was trying to squeeze out another and to prevent them from gaining the influence within the family that would be theirs if they successfully organized the rebuilding. Had Sarapang not found out in time to be able to attend the ritual celebrating the completion of the work, they might later have attempted to exclude him altogether and to claim that his membership had lapsed.

The land dispute here typically takes the form of an argument over the status of the property in question. The same informant is also involved in a long-running court case to recover lands owned by his great-grandfather, who was a reckless gambler. Being the only child of an only child, he had inherited a lot of property, and the rest of the family had deliberately encouraged him to ruin himself, lending him money and taking the land, piece by piece, in pawn when he lost. Sarapang wishes to redeem four of these rice fields, but now the family resident in the *tongkonan* concerned, who have been working the lands, claim that it is *mana'* – part of the indivisible inheritance belonging to the house. Here too a house ceremony was held in the early 1980s, but the family had refused to settle the land issue first. Sarapang brought his pig to that house ceremony, thereby renewing his involvement in the *tongkonan*, but they still refused his claim afterwards. Eventually he became disgusted with them, and declared: 'If

that's how it is, then, if you are buffaloes, we are wild buffaloes (*tedong lamba'*)' – in other words, we will not help you any more. He has now severed relations with that *tongkonan*.

Although conflict between kin can build up over years as different *tongkonan* branches compete with each other, it should not be thought that they are always so competitive. It is possible also for related houses to be remarkably co-operative. I came across one unusual instance in which the members of three separate *tongkonan* had decided to pool their resources and contribute a one-third share each to building a single house at Batu Lelleng, close to the town of Rantepao. The oldest of the three was a house called Marandan, at Ba'lele, in Tikala; the second was a branch house, also at Marandan; the third house, Lempangan, had long-standing links through marriage with both of the first two. So, although they were not all related to each other in the same way, they could be said to have an equal share in the new house. All three of the original houses had long since fallen down or been destroyed, and the families could not afford to rebuild any of them. When this happens, the house is not forgotten and the potential to rebuild it always remains, at least in theory, though people say: *na baa mo uai*, or 'the water has carried it away', or *daun lauan*, '[nothing left but] pumpkin leaves', meaning that no trace is left.⁸ These expressions evoke strong feelings of shame. Without the physical presence of the house as an embodiment of status, the family's standing is at least temporarily eclipsed. By deciding to co-operate in the building of this new, joint house, all three groups were able to restore their status at least partially, while retaining the right to withdraw from the arrangement at any time in the future should they wish to do so. The house was built in 1963–64, and a ceremony held for it the following year. Talking to me about the rebuilding, the present occupant (whose mother had played a prominent part in organizing the project) mentioned the satisfaction she felt at seeing the house completed: 'We see our ancestors (*to matua*) in the repaired house', was how she put it. In saying this she voiced a feeling, shared by many Toraja, that to maintain a house is a duty owed to one's parents, as well as to more distant ancestors, being the vital sign of a family's continuity. As the locus of ritual celebrations, the house is also of practical importance for family prestige. These are some of the reasons why so many Toraja are prepared to invest large sums of money in maintaining houses where they will never reside.

But, if in life one may inhabit a variety of houses and claim links to a

⁸ Pumpkin vines are often planted near the house. They grow rapidly and might quickly cover an abandoned site. I was told by Pak Kila', head of the Parandangan Ada' (a committee representing the Aluk to Dolo religion), who comes from Sesean district, that if a house burns down there, pumpkins will be planted on the site because 'it must be made wild again'. Only after eating the pumpkins may one rebuild on the site. This would appear symbolically to mark a separation from the inhabitants' previous misfortune. It is not done in Saluputti, however.

number of *tongkonan* without necessarily ever living in any of them, such flexibility is hardly possible in death, when one is obliged to rest in one place. How are decisions reached about burial locations, and what do these decisions signify? We find an element of strategy entering here, too. Whereas during their lifetime individuals make claims to houses, after their death, in a reverse movement, the houses may make claims to them, for living descendants will sometimes compete vigorously over placement of the body.

Placement of the dead: A question of honour

The house and the grave are often referred to as a pair (*sipasang*). No *tongkonan* is really complete without its *liang*, or burial chambers carved out of solid rock which are used by a family over generations. As a member of a house, one also has the right of burial in its graves. The grave is often referred to in ritual poetry as the 'house of the ancestors', or the 'house without smoke, village where no fire is lit' (*tongkonan tangmerambu, tondok tangdukku apinna*). Just as the founders of a *tongkonan* are remembered, so too is the maker of a *liang*. A house founder may be referred to as *to mangraruk* or *to umpabendan*, 'the one who erected', and the commissioner of a *liang* as *to pa'pa'na*, 'the one who pierced'. Quite often a *liang* is known by the name of its maker; *liangna Dondan*, or 'Dondan's *liang*', for example, refers not to any particularly famous ancestor buried in this grave but to its original maker. To hollow a burial chamber out of solid rock can take several years, the workmen's fees being calculated in terms of buffaloes per cubic metre. If a *liang* is five or six cubic metres in all, at a cost of two or more buffaloes per cubic metre, the overall expense is considerable. Today, as family tombs are running out of space, more and more people (especially Christians) opt for the easier alternative of a tomb dug in the earth, lined with concrete and usually with a miniature house built on top.⁹ This style of grave, known as *patane*, is traditional in the districts of Kesu' and Tikala, as also in the neighbouring *kabupaten* of Mamasa Toraja (west of Tana Toraja), but was not until recently common in other districts. Over the past ten years there has been a noticeable growth in the number of new concrete *patane* around the Toraja countryside, most of them surmounted by an elaborate, painted model *tongkonan*.

Famous ancestors are long remembered, not only in genealogies but also in terms of which *liang* they are buried in, and even of precisely which of the bolster-like cloth-wrapped bundles inside contains the ancestor in question. Anyone who really knows their genealogy also knows the burial places of their ancestors – just as they know their houses and land –

⁹ A few of the more fundamentalist Christians apparently no longer feel comfortable at the thought of lying in the *liang* together with their pagan ancestors, though this feeling is by no means universal.

though not all of the dead are subject to the same degree of attention. Preserving the bones of the dead is essential, according to traditional Toraja ideas, if their descendants are to be ensured of the blessings and fertility-enhancing powers of the ancestors. From time to time special ceremonies may be held to send additional sacrifices of pigs or buffalo for the use of the deceased in the afterlife. On these occasions, the tomb is opened, and bones will be rewrapped, while effigies of the deceased are taken down from their rock balconies beside the tomb, washed in the rice field, and equipped with a new set of clothes. These rites, implying a close relationship with the ancestors, may still be carried out sometimes even by Christians. The Toraja Church (Gereja Toraja), which is Calvinist, is officially opposed to them, although Catholics have incorporated *ma'nene'* (a version of these rites commonly conducted in the northern Sesean district) into the celebration of All Souls.¹⁰ At present, I see an increasingly rapid decline of this intimate relationship with the ancestors, a point to which I shall return later.¹¹

All those directly descended from the maker of a *liang* have a right to be buried there, though lateral kin (e.g., descendants of the maker's siblings) do not, unless they have intermarried. Since each individual is able to trace ties to several *tongkonan*, it follows that a person generally also has a choice of possible burial places. The ultimate choice of a burial site may depend on where a person was living, or more precisely, where they happen to be when they die. If they had rights in a *liang* of the village in which they had resided during their marriage, and they also happened to die there, chances are high they would be buried there. But if they had happened to return to their village of birth and died there, then it is more likely they would be buried there. Occasionally spouses make a special request before their death to be buried together in the *liang* of one of them – an option which, in its emphasis on the bond of love between man and wife, cuts across loyalties to a person's own family and its burial places. However, the last requests of individuals cannot be refused, and so the family will generally carry out their wishes. All the same, it can happen that, years later, the body of one of them will be retrieved and placed in its own family *liang*. I recorded instances of both men's and women's bodies

¹⁰ The Toraja Church became independent of the Dutch Reformed Church (whose Missionary Alliance began its activities among the Toraja in 1913) after the Second World War. Roman Catholic missionaries were allowed to operate in Tana Toraja from 1937. According to the 1990 Census, about 15% of the Toraja are Catholic, compared with 68% Protestant. The Catholic Church has consistently taken a more liberal position with regard to traditional practices. Rapidly growing Protestant sects today include the Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Gereja Kasih Persaudaraan (Church of Brotherly Love, an offshoot of the Church of Bethel, founded in the U.S.A.), and others.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of change and continuity in mortuary practices, and related shifts in cosmology, see Waterson 1993b.

having been taken back in this way¹² and was told that this is a matter of family pride, or of fear that 'people might talk'. People fear being accused of having so little love for a parent as to have allowed his or her burial in another family's *liang*. While during life, marriages throw out webs of affinal ties between houses (expressed and reaffirmed principally through the giving and receiving of pigs at ceremonies), the recovery of the deceased for the tomb of their own house would seem to reflect a desire for reconsolidation after death.

When I asked people about the choice of possible burial places, they consistently brought up the idea of burial in a 'wrong' tomb. For a body to be placed in a tomb where it has no right to be is regarded as a terrible offence. The problem arises partly from the finality of placement of the body in the tomb. As one informant pointed out, it was quite possible, during life, for a person to reside in a house which was not their own house of origin, and there might be nothing amiss with this, but to be placed in another house's *liang* was an altogether different matter. 'If you [i.e., a direct ancestor of yours] did not help to build the *liang*, it would be better to be thrown away on the ground and eaten by dogs', he concluded. I was unable to trace many examples of such 'wrong' burial, however, and it would appear to occur only rarely. In one of the few instances of this which I heard of, there appeared to have been question of a genuine mistake, since the location of the *liang*, at a place called Sanduni in Banga, is one where dozens of them are crowded close together in the rocks. The deceased was thus accidentally placed in the wrong *liang*. Following a complaint from the owner, a meeting of the village council was called and a lengthy discussion took place, which took two weeks to resolve the problem, drawing on all of the disputants' knowledge of genealogies and burial positions of ancestors. It was finally agreed that there had been a mistake. The door of a *liang* cannot be re-opened without a sacrifice, so that a pig had to be killed before the body was moved to the correct tomb. Another case in which rights to a *liang* were challenged brought the disputants to blows, so that they had to be forcibly separated. The ensuing genealogical wrangle was still not settled six months later.

Occasionally, the ancestors themselves create obstacles to burial, whereupon the tomb concerned becomes known as supernaturally powerful (*mendeata*). In an incident that occurred at a place called Ta'pak Langkan, near Ma'kale, in the 1960s, a tomb was opened before a planned burial to clean and prepare it. There was plenty of room inside the tomb, yet on the day when people came to place the body inside, they opened the door to find it crammed full of corpse bundles, so that it was impossible to get the body inside. Indo' Rapu', the woman who recounted this story, added that

¹² These instances were all from Saluputti district. There is some regional variation here. I was told that in the southern Ma'kale district it is much more common for spouses to be buried together.

there had been some dispute about whether the deceased really had rights in this *liang*, so that this untoward incident had been taken as a sign that he did not and that the ancestors were refusing to let him in.¹³

But if 'wrong' burials are relatively rare, then why is there such an intensity of emotion associated with this idea? A few informants suggested that this was connected partly with claims that might arise as a result of marriages between people of different ranks, the 'mixing' of bodies of high and low rank being regarded as polluting. A great many commoners can claim some kind of marriage link with the nobility, but the direct descendants of a noble house may try to resist the incorporation of individuals of mixed rank into their *liang*. Other informants stressed, however, that 'once you have children, you [i.e., your rights] cannot be separated' (*To sianak tae' na ma'din dipasisarak*). The children themselves will automatically have rights in the *liang* of both parents, and since they and the widow(er) generally have the first say in the matter of the placement of their deceased relative's body, it will be difficult for other members of the family to exclude the parent of lower rank from the *liang*.

All the same, given the choice of possible resting-places open to any individual, there is likely to be a debate, more or less heated, *whenever* someone dies about where they should be buried. The following is an example:

Case 7. In 1982, a young Torajan, studying at the university in the provincial capital of Ujung Pandang, fell ill and died there. His father was the headman of a village called Ra'bung, in Ulusalu, while his mother came from the neighbouring *desa* of Malimbong. The body was brought home to Ulusalu and the funeral was held there, but after it the father declared that the body would be taken to Malimbong and buried there, according to the wishes expressed by the mother's relatives. There is a place there called Salu Liang, or 'River of Graves', where over seventy tombs are cut in the rocks of a steep hillside. The next day the relatives of the dead boy, on both the mother's and the father's side, set out to carry the corpse to Malimbong. They were halfway there when the Ulusalu relatives suddenly attacked the Malimbong relatives with sticks. Seeing that people were being hurt, the dead boy's uncle, a

¹³ Other untoward incidents – for example, if a body should fall while it is being hoisted up to the *liang* (some of which are located high up on sheer inaccessible cliff faces) – will also be interpreted as signs of the ancestors' displeasure. In this particular case people must spend the night near the *liang*, sacrifice an additional pig the next day, and place offerings of betel nut in the tomb before completing the burial. Indo' Rapu' knew of one instance where this had happened, at a tomb at Ba'tan, near Kesu'. The deceased in question really did have rights in the *liang*, but had been given a funeral at which only one buffalo had been sacrificed, whereas his rank required at least three. All the other ancestors in this tomb had had very large funerals, with many sacrifices, and the incident was interpreted as a sign of their disapproval and their reluctance to let him join them.

village head in Malimbong, intervened to stop the fight and ordered them to take the body back to Ulusalu. Two weeks later, it happened that the dead boy's brother was murdered in Ujung Pandang and his body was brought home to Malimbong for the funeral. The village head here warned everybody against allowing any further incidents, or else there would be trouble. So this time the body was buried in Malimbong, in the family grave at Salu Liang.

This story was the first I was ever told of such happenings, but when I questioned people further they declared that these incidents were not at all unusual. A variety of comments were made on the possible motivations for such behaviour. One person pointed out the importance of ensuring the body a safe resting-place. I was told stories of intervillage warfare in the late nineteenth century, when funerals had been disrupted and attempts made to snatch the body in order to humiliate the relatives of the deceased. The worst possible thing that an enemy might try to do, I was told, was to chop up the body and throw it away so that the relatives could not recover it and give it a proper funeral, thus depriving them of an ancestor. The ancestors in one's own *liang* are a source of good fortune (*dalle'-dalleran*), especially if they themselves were rich or important persons. If you let the other side of the family have the honour of burial, they may insult you by saying: 'You talk a lot, but it was we who put your [father, mother, etc.] in our *liang*' (*buda kadammu, pa [ambe'mu, indo'mu] ki po ri liang*). Such a humiliating jibe is called *sisinga'*, which generally means 'to remind someone of, or claim payment of, a debt', for one is said to owe whoever owns the *liang* where one's ancestor is buried a great debt. *Tangmasiri' tama liangna tau*, 'not ashamed to enter someone else's *liang*', is a similarly embarrassing accusation. The same sentiment is expressed in the saying, *la'biran lo'ko' batu na liangna tau*, 'better a hole in the rocks than someone else's *liang*'.

Initially I wondered if the concern with placement of the dead represented a desire posthumously to expand the boundaries of the *rapu*, the group of a *tongkonan*'s descendants, by maximizing the accumulation of ancestors in its *liang* – which, as we have seen, is metaphorically referred to in ritual verses as a 'house', a sort of extension of the *tongkonan* itself. Informants denied any such conscious concern, however – an attitude which is congruent with the vagueness of *rapu* boundaries even in life. In this the Toraja contrast with, for example, the Merina as described by Bloch (1971), for whom the localized kin group, or deme, achieves its ideal form only within the tomb.¹⁴ We are brought back, then, to the fact that

¹⁴ By the Merina, in fact, the tomb and the group of ancestors contained within it are thought of as undifferentiated. Of course, the dead are not able to mar this ideal unity by quarrelling, as living kin are always liable to do. Merina kinship being bilateral, individuals are faced here, too, with choices of tomb. Since the decision to be buried in a particular tomb involves joining an association for its upkeep (which, given the

placement of a corpse is bound up with the complex of ideas regarding the relationship of the dead to the living, of the responsibilities of the living in tending the mortal remains of their ancestors, and the reciprocal responsibility of the ancestors to benefit the living. It is clear from many facets of the traditional religion that relations between people and their departed ancestors used to be extremely intimate, and it is not surprising, in spite of the disapproval of Toraja Calvinists today, that in many people these feelings still persist. According to the Aluk to Dolo, whenever a new body is placed in a *liang*, or any rite is held there, all those who have an ancestor in that *liang* should attend and offer betel to the dead. Sometimes a set of siblings makes a request all to be placed in the same *liang* at their deaths so that it will be easier for their descendants to make offerings there. It is thus a matter of convenience to have one's ancestors grouped together as far as possible, but the deeper reason behind this has to do with the securing of blessings from them.

For one side of the family to protest violently about the other's commandeering of a body is partly a matter of form: it is a question of honour (*longko*'), of 'fencing one's throat' (*mebala kollong*), i.e., of protecting oneself against a possible curse from the deceased person or the bad talk of other people. One person even declared that it was *pemali* (prohibited) not to make such protests – which implies that one may become subject to supernatural sanctions if one fails to do so. Others explained that if one did not do this, the dead person's spirit would say: 'I don't think I'll bother to go back there – they let me go just like that'. Some verses of mortuary chants invert such feelings of guilt at letting the dead go, reproaching the deceased himself for leaving without casting a backward glance or taking pity on the living. So, although it is impossible for *both* sides of the family to have the body, yet the spirit of the deceased should be influenced by the fact that the losers did at least show the proper emotions. Clearly the conflict arises from the profoundly bilateral tracing of kinship; the finality of death makes it harder to spread one's loyalties in many directions than it is in life. It is noteworthy that the concept of family honour (*longko*') should be brought in in such a context. Toraja commonly compare *longko*' with the Bugis or Makasar concept of *siri*', which Millar (1989:225) defines as 'a strong sense of honour that is particularly important vis-à-vis kinship ties.'¹⁵ Toraja may even borrow the word *siri*' to talk about their

size and magnificence of these monuments, entails considerable expense), the choice must be made during one's lifetime. One may elect to join the tomb group of either the mother's, father's or spouse's relatives, but in any case, one can belong to only one such group.

¹⁵ The Makasar concept of *siri*' as described by Chabot (1950) was a much more Mediterranean-like concept of the necessity for men to protect the sexual reputations of their family's women. Although this was the main focus of *siri*' in the 1940s, when Chabot was doing his research, he noted even then that in Ujung Pandang rules about women's behaviour and *siri*' were beginning to be relaxed, however. Millar, doing her

own particular complex of honour and shame (see, for example, Volkman 1985:163-5), but it is clear from my discussions with informants that *longko* is characteristically different from Bugis *siri*. *Longko* refers as much to a sense of shame felt in relation to other family members as to feelings between families. Feelings of shame (*kalongkoran*) may be provoked not only by a public attack on an individual's honour by someone else, as among the Bugis, but equally by a sense of one's own failure to do the right thing, especially if one then feels the scorn of other family members. When I asked people what circumstances were likely to engender feelings of *longko*, the emphasis seemed to be on failures of responsibility – failure to rebuild an origin house, to pay an inherited funeral debt, or, as here, to show proper concern over the placement of the dead.

Contested corpses and the creation of ancestors: Some comparative comments

Fighting over corpses is not unique to the Toraja. A remarkable parallel may be drawn with Roti – one which likewise points to the importance of links with the ancestors, as well as the individual's relation to kinship groupings. In the past, the Rotinese used to bury their dead in the house floor. The spirit of the deceased person (*nitu*) was then incorporated into the house, taking up residence in the loft, where it was represented by a three-pronged lontar-leaf figure called *maik*, which was hung in the rafters. Clan houses where many people had been buried became known as *uma nitu*, or 'spirit houses', accumulating ritual power and acquiring the character of temples. Fox (1987:175) claims that disputes over corpses are 'the closest [the Rotinese] come to real fights'. He describes an incident in which intense conflict broke out after the death of a woman who had married twice. The sons from her two marriages were ready to fight to the death over who was to have the right to perform the mortuary rites. The

research in the 1970s, encountered no examples of dramatic elopements as a result of *siri*. She indicates that, for the purpose of understanding status distinctions in Bugis society, the Bugis use of the Indonesian term *harga diri*, or 'self-esteem', is equally important (Millar 1989:37). Knowledge of one's *harga diri* requires showing just the correct degree of deference or pride in social interactions. This is a game most dramatically played out at weddings, the quintessential social and competitive occasions in Bugis society. It fits with Toraja priorities for *longko*, by contrast, to centre on competition in the context of mortuary celebrations, and on the honour paid to the dead through the sacrifice of buffaloes and pigs.

A person's funeral is also the occasion for a public summing-up of his or her career and social prestige. In this context, the singing of *retteng* (improvised verses in praise of the deceased, which may also have a critical or satirical content) is a distinctive feature (see Van der Veen 1966:16-17). In extreme cases, this can provide a licensed opportunity for public censure, for example in the case of a very stingy individual (though Van der Veen gives no examples of *retteng* of such unflattering content). The opportunities for expressing criticism appear to be much more developed among the Balinese (see below).

outcome would affect not only inheritance claims but also who would gain the benefits of incorporation of her *nitu*. The decision that was finally enforced was that the sons of the first marriage should perform the first part of the rites, and those of the second marriage should take charge of the remainder of the sequence. In this way a compromise was reached, the eventual burial place becoming less of an issue. In another instance, a woman fought with other relatives over the burial place of her brother, insisting that he be buried close to their father's old clan house, and eventually having her way.¹⁶

Fox sees these incidents as illustrating a distinctive aspect of kinship systems not only in Roti, but also more generally in the Austronesian world. For the individual in these systems, social identity and allegiance are characteristically not fixed from birth, but may be affected by many factors as he/she travels the 'path' of life (a prominent metaphor in Roti, Savu and Timor). One's identity is only finally determined after one's death, when surviving relatives continue to conduct rites affecting one's position as an ancestral spirit (Fox 1987 and personal communication). Although Toraja do not make such extensive use of 'path' metaphors in talking about these matters, I contend that their concerns are identical. The comparative examples indicate, firstly, a similar desire to establish beneficial relations with the ancestors. They suggest, secondly, a remarkable underlying similarity in kinship ideology in these superficially very different kinship systems, which nonetheless have two vital features in common: their organization around houses as points of origin, and the flexibility with which individuals may trace ties to houses. In both cases, an individual's career is not really concluded until after his/her funeral, or even later.

Balinese ethnography presents us with a dramatic, but somewhat different, parallel. Here, rather than being confined within the family, struggles over the dead may include a strong element of class conflict. Disorder sometimes breaks out at Balinese funerals in connection with the custom of *ngarap* (lit. 'to conduct', 'to carry out'), by which the ritual duty of the *banjar* members to conduct a body to the graveyard may be carried out in a disruptive manner. According to Warren (1991:222; 1993: 58-61), disruptions may take the form of withholding labour, stalling the preparations, playing with the corpse or cremation paraphernalia, and, in extreme cases, destroying the laboriously constructed sarcophagus, or even mutilating the body.¹⁷ The enthusiasm or otherwise with which

¹⁶ James Fox (personal communication). The Dutch outlawed the practice of burial in the house floor, to which the Rotinese responded by locating graves close to houses and building a miniature house on top of them.

¹⁷ Connor (1979) recorded from an informant accounts of incidents involving escalating hostility, in which the supporters and the enemies of the family would form up into battle lines and the body might end up being torn apart and the decomposing limbs being thrown to the ground, flung in irrigation ditches, or smeared over every person within reach. The participants in these fights appear to be in a dissociated state,

banjar assistance is given reflects the collective estimation of the former civic and reciprocal community contributions of the deceased or of the bereaved family. The villagers use this opportunity to contest presumptuous claims to status, to punish those who have shirked their shared-work responsibilities within the *banjar*, or to express their disapproval if the family is stingy in its reward of food and refreshments for their services. Disruptions are likely to be the more serious or violent the higher the status of the family that is judged to have violated the *banjar* norms of corporate behaviour (Warren 1993:59, 79-84; Bateson and Mead 1942:243). The refusal of burial rights constitutes the ultimate formal social sanction in village politics, which is especially potent because it threatens to impede the soul's transition to the next world and will thus bring ritual pollution and the risk of physical danger to the family and community, together with the danger of the deceased person's curse.

Warren emphasizes the extent to which Balinese religion retains pre-Hindu elements linking it to other indigenous religions of Indonesia and making it still a 'highly localized' religion, 'essentially ancestral and fundamentally rooted in place' (Warren 1993:55). However, both social hierarchy and community life have become more intricate and more highly elaborated here than almost anywhere else in Indonesia. Cemeteries are communal and under corporate control, and ancestors are worshipped collectively in village as well as family temples. The transformation of the dead into ancestors remains a crucial process. However, where for the Toraja and the Rotinese this remains the ritual responsibility of the family, for the Balinese the process cannot be completed without *banjar* assistance, and it is thus dependent on the extraordinarily tight community bonds that this requires. The intensity of relationships between the living and the dead hence is 'inextricably bound up with popular conceptions of citizenship' (Warren 1993:61). At the same time, *ngarap* incidents can be viewed as one element in a spectrum of collective levelling devices that form a counterpoint to the hierarchical and competitive aspects of Balinese social organization, which, as Warren argues, have been over-stressed in many analyses of Balinese political life (Warren 1993:80-4).

My three examples – Toraja, Roti and Bali – are linked by the continued importance they attach to relationship with the ancestors. This relationship seems to have survived the development of Hinduism in Bali, as well as three centuries of Protestant Christianity in Roti. Whether it will survive as long in Tana Toraja is an open question, for it has long been under attack from the Toraja Church (Gereja Toraja) as well as from other fundamentalist Protestant sects now winning converts there. The adherents of Aluk to

but are not in trance. Although in the late 1970s there were moves afoot to regularize *ngarap* and ban its most violent manifestations, all Connor's informants were emphatic about the fact that *ngarap* occurs in some form or other at every cremation (Connor 1979:107).

Dolo are at present becoming an increasingly beleaguered minority, and children are growing up with less and less knowledge of traditional practices, so that it seems likely that with the passing of the older generation a major shift in world view will come about.¹⁸

Struggles over corpses can also be interpreted as reflecting underlying tensions in kinship or social structures. In Toraja and Roti, death is the moment at which an attempt may be made finally to resolve the ambiguities of house membership, which need no resolution during life; in Bali the cremation may provide a day of reckoning for the family in terms of their standing within the community, which may choose this moment violently to assert the values of equality and reciprocity over hierarchy and social pretension. Are there perhaps more instances of this phenomenon in South-East Asian ethnography? If so, they might add significantly to our understanding of social processes.

Conclusion

In this paper I have examined two types of dispute, showing how, during their lifetime, individuals may press claims to membership of houses of origin, while after their death, conversely, it is houses which lay claim to individuals. Both of these moments can help us for an instant to perceive the limits of what is otherwise a remarkably fluid kinship system, without clearly bounded kinship groupings. I have argued that the system cannot be understood without taking into account the manner in which ties are traced to and through houses of origin and the graves that belong to them. The limits to individual allegiances can only be tested by looking at instances where disputes over rights in houses, land or graves have arisen. The cases which I have examined show how far the exercise of kinship claims is strategic, often involving an attempt to transform one kind of relationship into another. They provide illustrations of Bourdieu's 'practical kinship', of a system in action; and I would argue that a formal description of a system of this type could never sufficiently describe it. The ties that bind people together in this system also create a complex of powerful emotional bonds to houses, graves, land and ancestors. Individuals negotiate their own paths through the network of possible allegiances, building or losing reputations on the way; the fortunes of family branches rise and fall in the course of a few generations, as their houses are endlessly rebuilt or fall into disrepair. Close analysis of how kinship groupings relate to the material structures of house and tomb may do much

¹⁸ See Waterson (1984) for a fuller discussion. The process has only accelerated in the past ten years. On a return visit to my fieldwork area in June 1994, I found that the entire village where I had lived previously had recently converted to Christianity and had abandoned many ancestor-related customs, including the *ban manuk* rite, at which offerings were made to the ancestors at their tombs, and which formerly was one of the most intimate and enjoyable of Toraja rituals.

to illuminate the workings not only of the Toraja kinship system, but also of many other Indonesian systems.

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