TOTAL CONSUMPTION: THE MEANING OF EXCHANGE IN THE TANIMBAR ARCHIPELAGO, EASTERN INDONESIA[1]

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L'auteur décrit les formes et le sens de la "prestation totale" dans le contexte social de l'archipel Tanimbar. Pour ce qui est de la forme, il démontre que l'échange se réalise selon deux axes, l'un reposant sur l'alliance matrimoniale et, l'autre, sur des liens fraternels. Tandis que les relations entre les partenaires unis par l'alliance matrimoniale sont hiérarchisées et asymétriques, celles qui s'établissent entre partenaires unis par des liens fraternels sont égalitaires et symétriques. Quant au sens de l'échange, l'auteur explique que l'idiome rituel dans lequel il s'exprime est rempli de métaphores de prédation: le créancier se trouve face à son débiteur dans la position d'un prédateur face à sa proie. Cette logique de la "consommation totale" se retrouve dans toutes les dimensions de la vie de Tanimbar, même dans l'expérience de la mort, qui est perçue comme le moment où Dieu, le créancier suprême, consomme l'âme d'une personne qui s'acquitte ainsi de toutes ses dettes.

This article describes the forms and meaning of "total prestation" in the context of Tanimbarese society in Eastern Indonesia. With respect to form, it is shown that exchange takes place along two axes, one affinal, the other fraternal. Relations between affinal alliance partners are hierarchical and asymmetrical in character, while those between brotherhood alliance partners are egalitarian and symmetrical. With regard to meaning, it is demonstrated that the ritual idiom in which exchange is expressed is replete with metaphors of predation: a creditor stands to his debtor as a predator stands to his prey. This all-consuming logic can be shown to structure all aspects of Tanimbarese experience, including death, which is regarded as the moment at which God, the supreme creditor, "consumes" a person's soul in payment for all of his or her outstanding debts.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to describe the forms and meaning of exchange in the Tanimbar archipelago in Eastern Indonesia. With respect to form, it will be shown that the asymmetrical structure of affinal alliance is complemented by the symmetrical structure of what may be called "brotherhood alliance." The former is based on a principle of inequality, as between wife-givers and wife-takers, whereas the latter is based on a principle of equality. The opposition between these two principles is manifest in the flow of wealth which is both oriented in a particular direction (i.e., unilateral), and irreversible in the first case and bilateral in the second.

With regard to meaning, it will be demonstrated that "total prestation" in the context of Tanimbarese society takes the form of a gastronomy of people and valuables. The creditor-debtor relation which obtains between wife-givers and wife-takers is conceived of as a predatory relation: bridewealth articles and the children of a marriage between a mother's brother's daughter and a sister's son are represented as the wife-giver's "catch." Similarly, the living are regarded as the prey of the ancestors, and the terms used to designate the various levels of the social order (room, house, village quarter, etc.) all have among their connotations the image of a container, or an implement used to capture game. Thus, as Needham remarked in the context of his analysis of Purum society, "We see here, as elsewhere with prescriptive alliance, a mode of classification by which things, individuals, groups, qualities, values, spatial notions, and other ideas of the most disparate kinds are identically ordered within one system of relations" (1962:95; see also van Wouden 1968:2; and Barnes 1974:305-307). In the case of Tanimbar, it will be argued, that "system of relations" is given in the notion of "total consumption."

The Tanimbar archipelago, which consists of the islands of Yamdéna, Fordata, Larat, Molu, Sera, and Selaru, lies off the west coast of New Guinea (Irian Jaya). Tanimbar is counted as part of the Southeast Moluccas, one of three regions making up the Province of the Moluccas in Eastern Indonesia. Approximately 60,000 people inhabit the archipelago. These inhabitants are sedentary agriculturalists who cultivate maize, various kinds of yams, beans, and rice. They also tap palm trees to make palm wine, and process sago trees for flour. Their diet is supplemented by hunting and fishing, two highly valued activities. According to Chlenov, three distinct but related languages are spoken in the archipelago: (1) the language of Yamdéna; (2) the Kei-Kur language spoken on Fordata, Larat, Molu, Sera, and in the Kei archipelago to the north; and (3) the language of the Southwestern Islands, which is spoken on Selaru (1980:428).

As a result of the interest of Roman Catholic missionaries in the area (e.g., Drabbe 1940; Geurtjens 1941), Dutch colonial officials (Riedel 1886; van Wijk 1931), and naturalists (e.g., Forbes 1885), there exists a remarkably extensive body of ethnographic literature on the Tanimbar archipelago. Since Yamdéna and Fordata are the best-documented, the focus of the present essay is on the social organization of the inhabitants of these islands. It should be noted that much of the following analysis is inspired by, and derives its structure from, Cécile Barraud's in-depth account of the society of Tanebar-Evav in the neighboring Kei archipelago (1979).

CONSTITUTIVE UNITS

The constitutive units of Tanimbarese social order as expressed in the languages of the islands of Fordata and Yamdéna are given in Table 1. In order to arrive at a proper understanding of the nature of these units, it is necessary to explore the "resonances" (or alternative referents) of each of their respective names.

Each term normally has three alternative referents. The first is an anatomical resonance, for it is often the case in the Moluccas that the parts of the community are referred to on the analogy of the parts of the human body (Jansen 1977). The second resonance is the image of a container, or of an implement used to divide things. The third resonance is an attitudinal complex (cf. Barraud 1979:60-74). Although it is not always possible to discern all three resonances in a given term, this is more a function of our lack of information than any inconsistency in the logic of social classification (see Note 2).

The term which designates a village on the island of Fordata is *ahun*. The corresponding term on Yamdéna is *pnuan*. *Pnuan* also means "sheath of a sword." Since a sheath contains an implement used to divide things, the term *pnuan* is well-suited to expressing the notion of divisibility within an all-encompassing unity.

Yamdéna	**Fordata**	**Definition**
pnuan	**ahun**	village
suan	**arun**	village quarter
tnjame matan	**rahan ralan**	division of a village quarter, (sometimes a) clan
das dalam	**rahan**	house
tambil dalam	**alamin étal**	division of a house, room

Table 1: The Constitutive Units of the Tanimbarese Social Order.

On the island of Fordata, the "subdivisions" (or quarters) of a village are called *arun*. These "subdivisions" are never more than two to four in number. In addition to meaning "ear," a reference to human anatomy, the word *arun* signifies "a large basket woven from *lontar* leaves" which is used to carry fish. The *arun* could thus be viewed as containing its inhabitants like the basket contains fish. *Aru* also means adder, as in *ar'bajalat*,"a kind of snake which strikes with its tail," and in *ar'yaha* or "snake-dog," the word for scorpion. Drabbe records that if a snake is found in the village, its head is ground up and consumed in the form of a war draught in order to make the warriors fierce and courageous (1940:68). This suggests that the attitudinal complex which corresponds to, and is motivated by, the division of the village into *arun*, is "active, violent, directed from the interior toward the exterior" (Barraud 1979:65).

On the island of Yamdéna, the term which corresponds to the Fordata usage of *arun* is *suan*. Although *suan* is related to the Moluccan Malay word *soa* (Holleman 1923), Cooley's definition (n.d.) of the Ambonese *soa* as "a collection of clans comprising an administrative unit within the village" is both naïve and misleading. To begin with, *su-*, the root of *suan*, figures in the phrase *rasungap sir* which is used to refer to a row of houses "standing close by each other." *Su-* also appears in the verb *nsungap*, which means "to capture something, such as a chicken, under an inverted pot or basket." On putting the two senses together, a picture emerges of a row of houses which contain or "capture" their inhabitants.

The violence which the root *su-* connotes is directed both internally and externally. This violence is directed internally in the sense that the inhabitants of a *suan* are "captured" there by the ancestors (see Note 3). The fact that the term *suan* also signifies the treacherous spikes of bamboo which are planted in the walls and pathways leading up to the village in times of war implies that the violence is directed externally as well (see Forbes 1885:304).

In a sense, any division of a ground entails an element of violence since the division ruptures the continuum of nature. We are all familiar with the notion that danger is inherent in boundaries or divisions, and that societies will go to inordinate lengths to defend or enforce the boundaries which they draw around themselves (Douglas 1966). The boundary which usually receives the greatest emphasis is that between nature and culture; one of the further meanings of the term *suan*, that of "a stick for digging up tubers," reflects this idea. The stick does violence to the surface of the ground by rupturing the intactness of the earth, and the *natural object* which it liberates is thereby transformed into a *cultural product*.

The fact that pointed sticks denoted by the same term are used in gardening and for the defense of villages suggests that the Tanimbarese conceive of war and agriculture, and head-hunting and harvesting, in identical terms (a not uncommon association; see Needham 1976; and Downs 1977). Indeed, the community appears to have mobilized itself for battle on the basis of its organization into *suan*, and this same organization is one of the bases on which production groups are formed in those places where rice is grown (Drabbe 1940:77). Clearly, the *suan* is more than an "administrative unit"; it is in fact a *division*. Furthermore, it is a division which plays a role in ritual as well as in martial and agricultural activities. For example, when the community makes an offering to God, the sacrificer will "divide up" (*nsuk*) a "large cake of rice" (*sui*) and distribute portions among the *suan* of the community.

On the island of Fordata, the "subdivisions" or quarters of a village undergo further partition into what are called *rahan ralan*, a word meaning "insides of a house." The corresponding term on the island of Yamdéna is *tnjame matan*. In his attempt to delimit the boundaries of this group, Drabbe links the linguistic fact that *tnjame* means "foodstuff" to the social fact that members of a *tnjame matan* normally share the produce of their gardens with each other (1940:149). However, a very different sense may be read into this expression; namely, that the living are the "food" of the ancestors. The fact that *mata* also means "the cutting edge of a knife" (an implement used to divide things) is consonant with the idea of the ancestors dividing up the living as if the living were their prey.

Drabbe uses the term "clan" (Dutch: *stam*) when he refers to a *tnjame matan*: "by clan we understand a pure *tnjame matan*, i.e., a group of houses which have actually come forth out of the same clan house" (1940:188). The interjection of "purity" as a criterion implies that although some *tnjame matan* are less "pure" than others, they conform to the same model. The following two quotations confirm this point by revealing certain important respects in which the Tanimbarese system of social classification cannot be understood within a lineal framework. Although there may occasionally arise a resemblance between what we would recognize as a patrilineal clan and the composition of a *tnjame matan*, the patrilineal principle of group formation is constantly being modified by the structure of the house.

> Even if two members of a *tnjame matan* are entirely unrelated to each other, because one of them or perhaps both of them came from other *tnjame matan* to live in the same house, still they may not marry, since they come to be regarded as brother and sister. (Drabbe 1940:188)

> Sisters' children frequently turn up back in the house, viz. when they have been repudiated along with their mother. They become another full son or brother in the house too, and are no longer [regarded as] their mother's brothers' ward, because they become their brother or son. (Drabbe 1940:148)

The implication to be drawn from these quotations is that it is residence and not consanguinity, or locality, not patrilinearity, that determines group membership (cf. Turner 1978a; 1978b).

A group of brothers and the "house" they occupy (*rahan* on Fordata, *das dalam* on Yamdéna) are known by the same name or by no name at all. "It is said that the name of the house always comes from the guardian of that house" (Drabbe 1940:148). Drabbe uses the term "guardians" to refer to those persons who stand as wife-givers to the members of a particular group. By "wards," Drabbe means wife-takers. On Yamdéna, the wife-giver or "guardian" is called *nduan* ("lord"). The wife-taker or "ward" is called *uranak* ("sisters' children"). On Fordata, the corresponding terms are *dua* and *yan ur* (see Table 2).

Yamdéna	**Fordata**	**Definition**
nduan	**dua**	wife-givers, "guardians"
wain	**iaan--iwarin**	ego's group
uranak	**yan ur**	wife-takers,"wards"
ndur-lolat	**lolat**	wife-giving/wife-taking series

Table 2: The Constitutive Relationships of the Tanimbarese Social Order.

There are several houses without names in the village of Awéar on Fordata. Drabbe explains that these:

> . . . do not have a social function as separate houses. They appear to be later formations, which came to exist . . . as a result of dissension within the family. . . . The social function of which I speak is that every proper house is regarded as a link in a series of wards and guardians. Not only every person has his guardians and his wards, but every house as well. . . . On Fordata, the guardian of the house is called *dua dawan*, the great

> guardian, or preeminent guardian, while someone's personal guardian is called *tomata duan* or *tomata ténan duan*, i.e., the lord of the person or of the body of the person. They also speak of *dua alamin étal* or *dua kue*; the latter means little guardian, the former means guardian of the sleeping compartment as opposed to guardian of the house, which amounts to the same thing as nuclear family-guardian as opposed to extended family-guardian. (1940:154)

On Yamdéna, the word for the wife-giving/wife-taking sequences referred to above is *lolat* or "row." *Lolat-sivélek*, literally "exchange-row," is the name given to a closed cycle of matrimonial alliance which links thirteen of the principal houses of Tanimbarese society. Another name given to this series is *lolat dawan* ("the great row") to distinguish it from the *lolat kue* or "little rows" (Drabbe 1940:151-152). This distinction suggests that the thirteen houses do not derive their wives exclusively from their wife-givers in the "great row," but also have running through them one or more "little rows" linking them with houses outside the "great row." The reason why some houses have no name probably has to do with never having been incorporated as a recognized link into either of the above types of "rows."

Within the house, "authority over the female children and sisters, and over all the *ngrije* [affairs] of the family, e.g., contributions to a ward's or guardian's feasts and such like, [is vested in the] eldest in priority," the *kejain* (Drabbe 1940:203). The *kejain* or "elder brother" also exercises control over the movable and immovable treasures of the house. The latter are called *das ni mbarétar*, "the girders of the house." These pertain to a wife-giving/wife-taking sequence which has not been renewed in recent history, it being understood that the valuables which come into the possession of a house from one of its *nduan* can only be passed on to an *uranak* who belongs to the same "row." It is thought that alienating any part of the *das ni mbarétar* would incite the wrath of the ancestors concerned (Drabbe 1940:202).

The other class of treasures is called *lele-mase*, *mbije-ngoras*, "ivory and gold, arm-bands and necklaces." This expression covers both valuables which must be paid out to a wife-giver (*nduan*), and those which must be paid out to a wife-taker (*uranak*) in the on-going give and take of bridewealth payments and counter-payments. The *kejain* controls these valuables in the sense that his permission must be asked before the valuables can be reintroduced into circulation. However, the *kejain* is not at liberty to pass on such valuables to his own *nduan* or *uranak* without first consulting the other male members of the house (Drabbe 1940:202). On Yamdéna, the latter are called *famudi*, which means "later, in the rear." On the island of Fordata, the eldest brother is called *iaan*, and his subordinates are all called *iwarin*.

The rules of exchange governing the disposition of these bridewealth articles do not apply to the same extent to the proceeds of a man's own labor. For example, a youth is not obliged to pass on the yield from selling a batch of coconuts to his wife-giver (*nduan*), although he often does so in order to secure the latter's favor. It is of further interest to note that: "A younger brother, who has earned something by working . . . may give his earnings to the guardians on his wife's side without first having to ask permission from his elder brother, but he will give notice to his brother just the same. And if the latter demands all of his earnings, he cannot refuse" (Drabbe 1940:203).

The considerations which impinge on the disposal of goods disclose the hierarchical cast given to social interaction by the superiority ascribed to seniority and to the givers of wives. Following Dumont (1970:141), we may regard these considerations as formative of a triadic subject, since "the normative subject as opposed to the empirical agent is constituted not by a single person, but by a constellation of persons making up a whole," as in Figure 1.

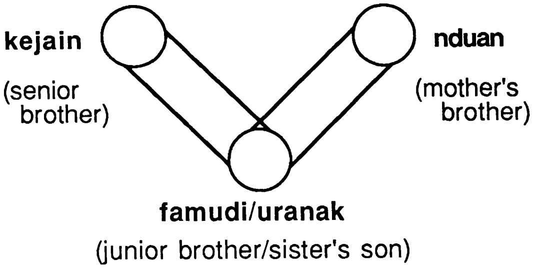

Figure 1: The Triadic Subject

The Tanimbarese divide the house into sides or "rooms," and it is these divisions which figure as units of exchange. The Fordata *alamin étal* finds its equivalent in the Yamdéna *tambil dalam*, "the contents (or occupants) of a room" (Drabbe 1940:148). Those men who come to inhabit the same house, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, are always regarded as brothers (Drabbe 1940:163). Thus, the model of a segmentary lineage system is quite foreign to the Tanimbarese mode of thought. It would be more in keeping with Tanimbarese ideology to regard the discrimination of "rooms" within a house as occurring in response to the "lateral" relations of exchange than the "vertical" or "branching" relations of descent from a common ancestor. In fact, the Tanimbarese traditionally lacked the linguistic means to express a segmentary lineage type relation:

> Family-names (a "van") are completely unknown on Tanimbar, and only in recent years have the few who can write tried to give themselves a "family-name" in imitation of Ambonese, Keiese, etc. They would choose their house-name for this (which name however extended further than an ordinary "family-name" and by no means always indicated consanguinity). (van der Kolk 1925:473)

The unitary regard in which the house is held underlines the indissociability of the group constituted by a *kejain* and the men who stand under him as younger brothers (*famudi*). This conflation has some substantial sociological implications:

> Here, no matter what the fluctuations in the number of brothers might be, the house is one and never knows more than two sides. It is thus an intangible form, which always imposes on the series of male collaterals the mould of the senior-junior pair . . . and unites in a single destiny the surplus cadets. The structure of the house therefore seems to be an obstacle to the development of an egalitarian patrilinearity as far as brothers are concerned. It poses hierarchy in duality. (Barraud 1979:94) (see Note 4)

In short, by virtue of its structure, the house consigns the category of younger brothers to anonymity. This is literally borne out by the fact that agnates who have split off and sought to establish themselves as autonomous entities are not always given a name. It is as if existence, in the sense of Drabbe's "social function," were only granted a new unit with reluctance. The "uncontained," for that is what the splinter groups must be, have no place within the dialectic between container and content that we have seen playing itself out across the different levels of Tanimbarese social structure.

THE PRINCIPLES OF EXCHANGE

Drabbe, whom it will be recalled uses the term "guardian" to refer to wife-givers (*nduan*), and "ward" to refer to wife-takers (*uranak*), gives an excellent summary of the principles underlying the Tanimbarese system of exchange:

> The ward must bring to his guardian all that comes from the man or pertains to the man. The guardian must bring to his ward all that comes from the woman or belongs with the woman. And so must the guardian frequently supply a wife for his ward. (1940:187)

The most comprehensive framework within which this flow of goods and ritual services is symbolically conceptualized is provided by the edible and nonedible products of the labor of the sexes. In an important sense, the sphere of production as represented by daily life is structured by the same polarities as ceremonial engagements (the sphere of exchange). Men hunt, fish, and tap palm sap. Women tend the gardens and engage in weaving. The special language which the Tanimbarese use on ritual occasions reflects this division. A phrase such as: "Hunting grounds enough, but no pigs," means that a wife-giver has enough wife-takers, but that the wife-takers have no valuables to offer him for the time being (Drabbe 1940:286). Similarly, when a man goes to the father of a prospective son-in-law to discuss the bridewealth for one of his daughters, he will: "See to it that his stone weir makes a good catch on the reef" (Drabbe 1940:282). Those who are well-versed in the ceremonial language would know that "ivory and gold are called *in* (fish) because like fish, they come from one's wards" (Drabbe 1940:273). That is, ivory and gold can be caught by means of a weir, the weir being one's wife-takers. In both of the above phrases, what is in reality an act of exchange is represented as an act of production (hunting or fishing). Thus, the first law of Tanimbarese symbolism may be said to take the following form: when a valuable that serves as an item of exchange is translated into one of the products of human labor (e.g., ivory and gold=fish), there is a concomitant translation of the category of persons who provide that class of valuables into one's own means of production (wife-takers=hunting grounds).

All of the above prestations "come from the man." Palm wine is another of those gifts received from one's wife-takers. Drabbe notes that those wife-takers who live in one's immediate vicinity are called *lingat*, a type of building where palm wine is imbibed, "because the palmwine is received from the wards" (1940:271). We are also told that when someone has had a bad harvest and hungers, or has no seed to plant, he or she will turn just as naturally to a wife-giver (*nduan*) for leguminous foods or the seed, as to a wife-taker (*uranak*) for fish or meat, but never the reverse

(Drabbe 1940:187). It is consistent with the above set of associations that one refers to one's wife-givers and wife-takers as *bain* ("wooden eating dish") and *botil* ("flask"), respectively, "because one receives foodstuffs from the first, and palmwine . . . from the second" (Drabbe 1940:271). Thus, the second law of Tanimbarese symbolism may be stated as follows: an alliance relation is conceived in terms of its contents, and the parties to that alliance are represented as the containers of that content.

The underlying theme of Tanimbarese exchange relations is that of a gastronomy of valuables (as in the equation "ivory and gold=fish"). Fish and flesh "come from the man," whereas vegetable foods "come from the woman." In accordance with this distinction, a word meaning "provisions of a vegetable kind" is used to refer to the class of white shell arm-bands and women's earrings which, "like the provisions . . . come from the guardians" (Drabbe 1940:273). Thus, "what we call total prestation--prestation between clan and clan in which individuals and groups exchange everything between them. . . ." (Mauss 1966:68), has been realized by the Tanimbarese as a form of "total consumption," and the society proceeds on the assumption that the appetites of its constituent members are insatiable.

Drabbe characterizes the *nduan/uranak* relationship as one of "reciprocal aid between families" in all kinds of affairs (Drabbe 1940:186). However, the nature of the aid differs in accordance with the nature of the relationship: *uranak* must "tap palmwine" (*raflait*) for their *nduan*, and *nduan* must "supply loincloths and sarongs" (*ral umbin tais*) for their *uranak* (Drabbe 1940:187). Figure 2 lists the articles which figure in these transactions according to their provenance.

Wife-takers **Uranak**	Wife-givers **Nduan**
meat, fish, palmwine	garden produce
gold breast ornaments	shell arm-bands (**mbije**)
gold earrings (**lelbutir**)	necklaces (**ngoras**)
elephant tusks (**lele**)	women's ornaments (**kwem**)
antique swords	loincloths and sarongs
raflait 'to tap palmwine'	**ral umbin tais** 'to supply loincloths and sarongs'

Figure 2: The Flow of Wealth

BROTHERHOOD ALLIANCE

The *awai*-bond or "brotherhood pact" figures prominently in the morphology of Tanimbarese society. It complements the affinal alliances discussed thus far in the sense that while it, too, allies villages, it is not based on the difference which enables two groups to intermarry, for it posits their identity instead.

The brotherhood pact precipitates "a relation which is equivalent to the relation in the private life of brother to brother, namely a certain community of goods, wherein nothing may be refused" (1940:220). What this quotation imports is that the Tanimbarese distinguish between domestic affairs and "public affairs" and that brotherhood relations are analogous to the former despite their public character. To clarify this point further, within the house (or, what could be called the private domain), the regime is one of a "community of goods." However, between houses (or, in the public domain), the regime is one of a "separation of goods," since the flow of wealth along wife-giving/wife-taking "rows" must observe the separations diagramed in Figure 2 in order to be meaningful.

As noted previously, the senior brother directs the actions of his juniors whenever these pertain to exchanges with other houses. In this sense, one does not find an "egalitarian patrilinearity" among the inhabitants of Tanimbar as is found, for example, among the Nuer of the African Sudan (cf. Barraud 1979:94). As a class, younger brothers are anonymous, or what amounts to the same thing, identical to each other, since they do not possess any identity in public as autonomous agents. Only houses, and the senior brothers who represent them, possess a *public* identity (cf. Drabbe's "social function"). This is because public identity is a function of difference, which is to say, hierarchy. In the public domain, no two houses which enter into exchange relations with each other can ever be on a par, since the *sine qua non* of their interaction is the wife-giving/wife-taking relationship with its hierarchized axis (the superior/ inferior valuation of the parties concerned). However, in the private domain, the hierarchical principle is supplanted by a principle of equivalence. As will be recalled, everyone who comes to live in the house is regarded as a "full brother or sister," regardless of their origins as affines. Significantly, a male ego even calls his sister-in-law *wain* ("brother") upon incorporation (Drabbe 1940:143-145), as if the encompassing framework of the house has also obliterated sexual differences.

Although it might seem that the position of authority which the senior brother enjoys within the household contradicts the principle of equivalence, it must be recalled that the senior brother's precedence is predicated on the fact that he mediates the separation between public and private domains, just as his function is to preserve the "separation of goods." In other words, the senior brother's internal position is conditional on the maintenance of external relations of difference. Moreover, as will be seen, the internal relation of equivalence which underlies the "community of goods," and informs relations between *wain* generally, is reproduced externally in the public domain in the context of the *awai*-bond.

The *awai*-bond is entered into by two or more villages following a communal friendship visit in order to wage war against a common foe, conclude a peace, or in recognition of a common ancestry. The extent of the liberty which may be taken with each other's property during subsequent communal friendship visits is specified at the outset. Although these visits are meant to reaffirm the *awai*-bond, in practice this is a pretext, and the real reason for undertaking such a trip is to extract valuables from one's host which are necessary to pay off a fine or other debt contracted by the village. Naturally, when the host's turn to go on a visit comes around, the roles of donor and recipient are reversed (Drabbe 1940:217-218).

The extent to which this kind of alliance is based on a principle of identity or equivalence may be gathered from the fact that a village will often transfer the "signs" (*faniak*), by means of which it identifies itself, to its brother village as a token of its sincerity. For example, the village of Lauran on the island of Yamdéna gave the people of Méjanu the right to bear the title of *kota* ("fortification") which had been Lauran's prerogative since the seventeenth century when the Dutch briefly established a lodge there (Drabbe 1940:221).

Most inter-village alliances are characterized by an indiscriminate (bilateral) transfer of articles, whereas in other cases, the exchange is oriented. For example, the village of Méjanu may only obtain "female ornaments" from the village of Sormudi (which is also on Yamdéna) and *vice versa* (Drabbe 1940:217). Thus, the relation between these two villages is identical to the relation between wife-givers and wife-takers. This implies that the original pact must have been affinal rather than fraternal in character.

In the Tanimbar archipelago, affinal relations are governed by a strict set of rules. For example, the uterine nephew must assume a posture expressive of "reverential fear" when visiting the house of his maternal uncle. This contrasts markedly with the ribaldry which characterizes the relation between "brothers" (*wain*), and the free use which the latter make of each other's less valuable property (Drabbe 1940:145-146).

"Brothers" are defined by the fact that they neither make purchases among themselves nor, obviously, exchange sisters as wives. The same definition applies to the wife's sister's husband (WZH). It is of special importance to note that the wife's sister's husband is called *wain* ("brother") by a male ego, whereas he calls both his wife's brother (WB) and his sister's husband (ZH) *ifar*, a Malay term meaning "brother-in-law" (Drabbe 1940:144). The Tanimbarese relationship terminology differs in this regard from the classical terminologies of asymmetric prescriptive alliance as described by Needham (1962, 1980). That difference is due to the rule that generates the unique position of the wife's sister's husband, the rule that two brothers may not marry two sisters, which may be characterized as a kind of "proscriptive injunction" (Fox 1980:10). As Drabbe records,

> When someone's brother is already married to one of the mother's brother's children, he is no longer free to take one of the latter's children to wife. . . . It is not the guardians who would be disturbed by this, but his brother, who would regard this as [just] as serious an insult as if he had committed adultery with his wife. (1940:189)

The consequence of this rule is that the wife's sister's husband is neither in the position to "tap palm wine" nor to "supply loincloths and sarongs" for his symmetrical counterpart. Only ego's sister's husband may provide palm wine, and only ego's wife's brother is in a position to supply loincloths and sarongs.

The position of the wife's sister's husband (*wain*) in this local ensemble of relations prefigures the existence of a category of identicals on the inter-village scale of relations. And as noted above, there are, in fact, two diametrically opposed types of alliances into which whole villages may enter: the *awai*-bond or "brotherhood pact," and a kind of *nduan/uranak*-bond or "affinal pact." The former is marked by the exchange of *faniak* (symbols of identity) at its outset. It does not matter what kind of valuables are requested on a communal friendship visit, for a brother cannot be refused. Conversely, the parties to an affinal pact must observe the same rules of exchange with respect to who may proffer what as do houses that intermarry.

The elementary structure of exchange in the Tanimbar archipelago could, therefore, be said to generate a minimum of four distinct positions as can be seen in Figure 3.

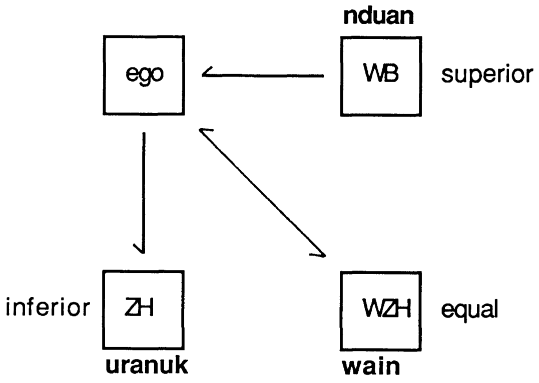

Figure 3: The Elementary Structure of Exchange

Within this ensemble, the wife's sister's husband is an alliance partner unlike any other. His position is unique because it is the fact that he is an affine without a difference that distinguishes him. In essence, his position in the social structure can only be defined negatively, that is, by reference to the rule that two brothers may not marry two sisters. As a result, he is neither inferior nor superior to ego. He is identical, an equal. Indeed, his position is motivated by what appears to be a striving for concordance and balance within the system of exchange as a whole. In order to have concordance between the inter-village and the domestic spheres of alliance, the discrimination of a fourth position at the domestic level, identical to ego's own, is a necessary concomitant. And in order for there to be balance, the hierarchical principle governing *nduan/uranak* relations must be complemented by its opposite: the egalitarian principle which governs relations between *wain*.

It is noteworthy that other examples of quaternal alliance structures may be found in the literature on Eastern Indonesian social formations. For example, among the Ema of Timor:

> The cycle ABCA should, by rights, be ABCDA [where capital letters stand for intermarrying "core houses"]. Shortening it seems to provoke an uneasiness, a feeling of confusion, especially for the woman born in B, over the status of giver and taker. One woman expressed her feelings in this way: "A gave birth to me; in turn, I gave birth. How can A come and take my daughter?" In other words, how can givers become takers? (Clamagirand 1980:142-143)

One wonders if the above expression of dissatisfaction with "three-partner cycles" may not also be motivated by a concern with the establishment of brotherhood alliances. However, like most writers on Eastern Indonesia, Clamagirand confines her discussion of alliance to the matrimonial variety. Silence with respect to forms of brotherhood alliance is one of the major weaknesses of alliance theory. This lacuna is partly attributable to the founder of that theory, Claude Lévi-Strauss.

In his classic *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Lévi-Strauss drew a distinction between brotherhood and intermarriage in terms of the different kinds of solidarity they promote. According to Lévi-Strauss, brotherhood expresses a mechanical bond, whereas intermarriage engenders organic solidarity:

> Brothers are closely related to one another, but they are so in terms of their similarity. . . . By contrast, brothers-in-law are solidary because they complement each other and have a functional efficacy for one another . . . each providing the other with what he does not have--a wife--through their simultaneous renunciation of what they both do have--a sister. The first form of solidarity adds nothing and unites nothing; it is based upon a cultural limit, satisfied by the reproduction of a type of connexion the model for which is provided by nature. The other brings about an integration of the group on a new plane. (1969:484)

The evidence from the Tanimbar archipelago appears to contradict these remarks. Brotherhood alliances *does* involve a "renunciation," the renunciation of identity which is powerfully expressed in the transfer of "signs" (*faniak*) from one village to another. Nor is the model for brotherhood alliance provided by nature, since there is nothing natural about the rule that two brothers may not marry two sisters. In short, brotherhood relations and affinal relations are dictated by the same logic, the logic of the *total system* of exchange.

AFFINAL ALLIANCE

There are a variety of expressions in the ritual language which are indicative of the unilateral mode in which affinal alliances are contracted in the Tanimbar archipelago. "*Ndur-lolat* are all those whom someone can reckon directly or indirectly as sister's children, because they are the sister's children of his sister's children," or the sister's children of the latter, and so forth (Drabbe 1940:271). *Ndur-lolat wangim* denotes the wife-taking series which have existed "from of old." Another expression which refers to these ancient series is *snjarit*, which means "a path that runs from the East to the West over the island" (Drabbe 1940:272).

It is to these ancient pathways that the *das nduan*, "lord of the house," would belong. The *das nduan* is the person who bestowed the first wife and a name upon a house (Drabbe 1940:148). But every house has more than one wife-giver, given the rule that two brothers may not marry two sisters. Thus, a man's ancestral *nduan* (the *das nduan*), his father's *nduan*, his mother's *nduan* and his wife's *nduan* may all belong to the same house or to four different houses (Drabbe 1940:150). Each house thus constitutes a node or crossroads in a vast and intricate array of pathways, all of which run in different directions. However:

> . . . the bringing of valuables to wards or guardians does not take place arbitrarily. One always has guardians and wards in different series, and one must take care that one does not give valuables from father's wards to mother's guardians, or valuables deriving from extended family-guardians to wards from the nuclear family-series. (Drabbe 1940:188)

The two last mentioned types of guardians are opposed as the house (*das*) as a whole is opposed to the "rooms" (*tambil*) within it.

The Tanimbarese are as particular about the determination of rights in children as they are about determining the rightful recipients of bridewealth objects. Thus, in the event of marriage with a *bat waljete* ("foreign woman") as opposed to a *bat nduan* (the wife provided for a man by his *nduan*), "as far as the children of the young pair are concerned an agreement is concluded between the guardians of the young woman and those of the young man. They "halve the fish"; half of the children follow the guardians of the father, the other half those on the mother's side" (Drabbe 1940:198). This is concordant with the imagery of wife-takers providing their wife-givers with fish (as in Figure 2). The children are the wife-giver's "catch."

Given demographic fluctuations and/or the deterioration of existing alliance relations, the Tanimbarese are sometimes forced to allow certain valuables to cross over from one "path" to another. This is the underlying reason for the reference to bridewealth articles derived from the marriage of a sister to a foreigner as being "hot" in the following quotation:

> When some men are afraid of [bridewealth] objects which have been received as purchase money for a girl, because they are heirlooms which have long been lodged in a specific house [*das ni mbarétar*] the others say: these things are certainly hot, but the sarong of the woman has cooled them all off [meaning]: they are always paid for a wife. (Drabbe 1940:376)

The danger here lies in having offended the foreigner's ancestors who established the *ndur-lolat wangim* series in which the valuables ought to have remained in circulation forever. The fears of those who are uneasy are quieted, however, by turning their attention away from the fact that "paths" have been crossed to the more enduring truth that the articles were always meant to be exchanged. In a sense, the net transfer is portrayed as simply having confirmed the categorical order which may be expressed in the form of a proportional analogy where:

male:female::hot:cool::gold:sarong.

In addition to mediating relations in the world of men, female ornaments establish lines of communication between the world of substance and the immaterial forms of things. One of the most natural gifts or treasures for a mother's brother to give to his sister's son is the power to be a *mat'los* or "seer." This power is paid for with articles which are always given by a wife-taker to a wife-giver. In return, the uterine nephew receives female ornaments from his maternal uncle.

> The latter [articles] are called the ladder and the rope along which the dead descend. . . . Should someone wish to pass on his art to his wards, he calls up his dead and invites them to sit on a plate. They are then brought on the plate to the ward who will be entranced by them in the future. The dead take possession of him and "turn his eyes around," so that from then on they will no longer just see matter, but the souls and spirits as well. (Drabbe 1940:409)

The wife-giver is the source of many things. He is the source of extra-ordinary vision, the source of life as embodied in women, and sometimes, a source of men. With regard to the latter point, if a house is on the verge of extinction, the "lord of the house" (*das nduan*) comes to the fore as the person *obliged* to replenish it through adoption. For this purpose, he may choose either a stranger or a man belonging to one of his other series of wife-takers.

In the first case, a payment which on Fordata is called "paying water and milk" must be made to the house which provided the adoptee. This payment consists of two sarongs, a costly gold earring to "cool the man's head," and an elephant tusk "for the milk" (maternal care). On the contrary, "If a ward is taken, only an ear-ring is given for the cooling of his head, and for all that the ear-ring comes back again later on account of the relation of ward and guardian" (Drabbe 1940:147). This is the only known case of a *reversal* in the flow of goods, for the only way the earring could return to its source would be if it were a man's earring (a male ornament) in the first place. The symbolic reason for having to "cool" the youth's head is that his passage between houses goes against the entire order of nature because it reverses the flow of life as embodied in woman from east to west along the "paths." In Tanimbarese ideology, emphasis is placed on women being married out. Accordingly, women are called *mangum* ("strangers"). By contrast, men are represented as stationary and are called *nuse nduan* ("countrymen" or "lords of the land") (Drabbe 1940:241). However, the Tanimbarese system of exchange with its unilateral marriage cycles can only remain viable by adopting men in. Thus, the system is not so much based on men exchanging women as on people exchanging people in order to preserve intact the *relations between houses* which were established by the ancestors (cf. Barraud 1979:198-99).

Another occasion where the *nduan* manifests his concern for his *uranak* and for its well-being is at the first hair-cutting ceremony for a child (Drabbe 1940:15). Before any hair is cut, the child's father flicks a few drops of palm wine towards God and the dead, and beseeches the latter to: "Take away the effluences of the East and West monsoons" (Drabbe 1940:23). If the child is a boy, the *nduan* will have brought a loincloth; if a girl, a shell arm-band. The *nduan* twirls this above the child's great fontanelle before proceeding to cut the hair. Afterwards, the child is given pork and rice to eat for the first time.

The reason the east-west axis is brought into relief in these circumstances (as in the father's imprecation to God and the dead) has to do with Tanimbarese conceptions of birth as being a descent, growth as being an ascent, and fatal sickness as being a departure along the east-west axis, which is horizontal.

Evidence for the notion that to be born is to descend can be gathered from the following array of beliefs and practices. "Once in a while a small worm descending on a thread is seen in a house. Such a creature is called *totolir*, something that is lowered down, and is a sign that God let down a child, hence that before long a child will be born in the house" (Drabbe 1940:383). Similarly, in preparation for the delivery of a child, a rope is tied above the platform on which the expectant mother kneels "so that she can pull herself up on it." During her final contractions, she is supported from behind by the "up-lifter" (*mangékit*), "who exerts downward pressure on the belly, so that the child will not return above." Meanwhile, the midwife who sits in front of the mother calls to the child: "Come down, come down" (Drabbe 1940:240).

The notion that to grow is to ascend is revealed in the words of the address uttered by a ritual instructress over the sacrificial object which puts an end to a child's three-month period of seclusion following birth:

> Take all badness away from the child, make him peaceful so that he be neither sick nor lunatic, plant an *u'langaru* (long, thick kind of *rattan*) on his crown so that he reaches up to the firmament, and bury his roots eight levels deep in the ground, make him grow and multiply so that he, having become great, marries and increases himself with vigour in this clan. (Drabbe 1940:245)

The symbolic equation between person and plant which is posited in the above address has been elaborated upon in many different ways in Eastern Indonesia (see, for example Fox 1971; and Barnes 1974:74, 229-33). What is unique about the use the Tanimbarese make of this imagery is the manner in which the process of growth is represented as unfolding along a vertical axis, for this is the opposite of the horizontal axis, the axis of death. Death unfolds along a horizontal plane in the sense that a corpse is laid out on its back with the knees raised and bound together with a rope to form an inverted "V" (Drabbe 1940:252). This is the reverse of the vertical kneeling posture assumed by a woman in labor. The theme of death unfolding on a horizontal plane receives further expression in the practice of suspending the deceased's coffin between four stakes in such a way that his feet point westwards (Drabbe 1940:256). His "soul" (*mangmwate*) is thought to travel to Selu, an island off the west coast of Yamdéna (Drabbe 1940:405-6).

In view of all of the above, it is fitting that sickness--which is life-threatening--is associated with the effluences of the East and West monsoons (Riedel 1886:278). We conclude that the reason the (horizontal) east-west axis is brought into relief in the context of the first hair-cutting ceremony is that this is the first time the child's "life"--the verticality of his birth and growth--is tampered with.

EXCHANGE IN THE FACE OF DEATH

Thus far, the discussion in this paper has focused on exchanges connected with the creation and maintenance of life. But there is also death, the phenomenon that illuminates the categories of Tanimbarese thought most sharply. Death is also an occasion for exchange to take place, and by exchanging, the Tanimbarese reaffirm the categorical order that governs life (cf. Forman 1980:163; Hicks 1976:107-25). Tanimbarese mortuary ritual therefore deserves in-depth scrutiny. The following description is derived from Drabbe's account (1940:251-57; cf. also Geurtjens 1941:115-21), and is offered by way of illustration of how the principles which have been the focus of the present inquiry find expression in practice.

If a death occurs in the morning, the sons of the deceased invite the members of their *tnjame matan* to a meal of rice and pork that same evening. The date of the official funeral ceremony is fixed over the meal. The sons then depart to inform the deceased's wife-takers (*uranak*), and to ask his wife-givers (*nduan*) for arm-bands, necklaces, and sarongs. When the sons return home, they lay out the corpse on the floor in front of the *tabu*, a seat of honor at the foot of the household altar. A thin piece of bamboo is suspended parallel above the corpse, and a long piece of linen is draped over it. This is called "the sail of the dead." The next stage is called "the illumination of the eyes." Two of the arm-bands just received from the wife-givers are placed on the eyes of the corpse and another arm-band is laid on the mouth. It is said that "the arm-bands on the eyes are eyes so as to be able to see in the realm of the dead, that on the mouth a mouth to be able to speak with the dead."

The same evening, the wife of the deceased's eldest son "illuminates the eyes" for a second time, having already visited her *nduan* for the necessary valuables. The next evening, the wife of the second eldest son does the same, and so on, until each of the wives have taken their turn.

After the "illumination" on the first night, the eldest son invites the young people of the village into the house. Before the festivities begin, however, he makes an offering to the instruments:

> Ye drum and gong, chew this *siri*-quid, and call out to the East and West, so that the whole wards-row [*ndur-lolat*] hears, and come carrying goats and pigs, with which I shall mournfully feast my [father].

On the day of the official ceremony, the eldest daughter of the deceased must provide a pig (tended for many years in advance). "The pig is the central point of the day; it is the 'back' of the deceased, it 'resurrects' him as it were." The second eldest daughter must provide an antique sword symbolizing the knife with which the pig is to be butchered, and an ear-ring, "which represents the string on which the jawbone of the pig is hung." The wife-takers of the deceased bring pigs, pieces of foreign cotton (to swaddle the corpse), and gold ear-rings; his wife-givers bring more of the valuables already mentioned. The *totolir tabun*, "the lowest part hanging down," is the valuable which generates the most excitement. The *totolir tabun* is either a costly necklace (*ngoras*) or a pair of ear-rings of filigree gold (*kwém*) which, together with a string of shell arm-bands, are brought by the "lord of the house" (*das nduan*) and hung on the bamboo directly above the corpse's face.

After all of the valuables have been deposited, the corpse is picked up, swung back and forth nine times, and then lowered through the door into a coffin. Four men carry the coffin to the entrance to the village where the deceased is subjected to a kind of inquisition to determine what unpaid debt or unrequited sin caused his death. The porters jerk forward each time the deceased confesses. A bamboo stick is broken at each confession and the pieces are "nined away" (*nsiu i*) over the village wall. The deceased is then taken to his final resting place (a fifth man carrying the lid of the coffin). Upon the porters' return, all those valuables brought by the wife-givers which have not been destroyed are presented to the wife-takers, and *vice versa*. The wife-givers also receive the smoked skins of the pigs. The eldest daughter receives the *totolir tabun*, and the second eldest the string of armbands. The *das nduan* is presented with the sword and the skin of the back-pig. He must eat the latter to prove that he is the "real lord" of the deceased. If he is not, he will die. Afterwards, the jawbone of the back-pig is hung up in his house as an "everlasting sign of his mastership." When the children of the deceased visit him, he points to this, saying: "Never will you be able to deny that you are my people." The term used here is *tomwatte* ("people"), which is synonymous with *uranak*.

Some days afterwards, the widow and her eldest son go to the gardens where they extirpate nine potato plants which must "follow the deceased." Two coconut trees are also chopped down, and the widow remarks: "After the period of mourning we will give [the rest of this grove of] coconut trees to our wards." That evening, a seer (*mat'los*) cooes up the soul of the deceased and requests him to have all of the defunct members of the house gather at an appointed place. The *mat'los* asks the assembly of ghosts why they have all had to depart from life. This information is paid for with the neck skin of the back-pig. The *mat'los* later reveals the cause to the survivors who will attempt to redress this collective "fault" or "sin" (*salin*). Afterwards, a nobleman "nines away" the "fault," and smashes a plate "as a sign that the deceased may no longer return."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Three themes emerge from the foregoing account and attract further attention by way of summing up: the notion of "fault" (*salin*), the axis of exchange, and the connection between wife-giving and cognition.

For the Tanimbarese, it is impossible to die a natural death. There is always some "fault" at issue. Drabbe was told a dream which is of interest in this regard (1940:423-24). His informant dreamed that he had been led by a spirit along the weathervanes and over the ridge of the roof of his house to a great house where, after passing through many rooms, he came before God.

> The supreme being stared straight at him, took him in from head to toe and made a gesture of dismissal with his hand in silence. And so they went back. The supreme being had not found any fault in him and for this reason not only was he successful the following day on the warpath but later on as well. (Drabbe 1940:424)

And what if God had found fault in him? "They say of God who lets a person die: *nain tomwatte*, he eats the person. This mostly occurs in maledictions, they say: 'God eat you,' or 'God take you.' Of the spirits they say the same" (Drabbe 1940:429). Death, then, is a kind of final gobbling up in this consumer-oriented society; the point at which life, one's most precious possession of all, is taken in payment for all one's outstanding debts. Consequently, it is not fortuitous that the "guardian" as an imparter of wives--hence, the mediator of life--to his "wards" also pays their debts (cf. Drabbe 1940:187, 193), as if to guard them against death. But there is an irony here, since the wife-taker's children become the wife-giver's "catch" in return.

There are many similarities between God as life-giver and the wife-giver. The wife-giver is called *nduan* ("lord"), and on the island of Fordata, God is called *Duadilaa*, "the Great Lord" (Drabbe 1940:427). Although the latter belongs to a higher order of being, the two nevertheless complement each other. *Totolir* is the name given to the worm dangling from a thread which is regarded as a sign that God has let a child down into the house. The *totolir tabun* provided by the wife-giver hangs at the other end of a person's life, his funeral, marking a departure as opposed to an entry. The direction of travel is once again down (for the corpse is lowered out a trap-door in the floor of the house), and the deceased then "sails off" to the island of Selu in the west. The symbolism of odd numbers, nine and five, emphasizes the irreversibility of the transition. By contrast, even numbers signify continuity and growth, as in the ritual instructress' address to put an end to a newborn child's period of seclusion, where even numbers figure most prominently.

This same notion of irreversibility underlies and pervades the flow of wealth, where "female ornaments" travel in one direction and "male ornaments" travel in the opposite direction (see Figure 2). The ritual address to drum and gong, and the importance attached to the *snjarit*-paths (along which matrimonial alliances are contracted), can now be seen to possess a "total significance": the east-west axis, which is the axis of death, is also the axis of exchange, with life as embodied in woman flowing out of the east towards the west, as well as prestations of masculine goods travelling in the opposite direction, all on the same horizontal plane. This highly abstract schema is very concrete for the Tanimbarese, and can be grasped if one conceptualizes it in terms of how houses are arranged in the following sketch of the village of Aru'Bjab on the island of Yamdéna:

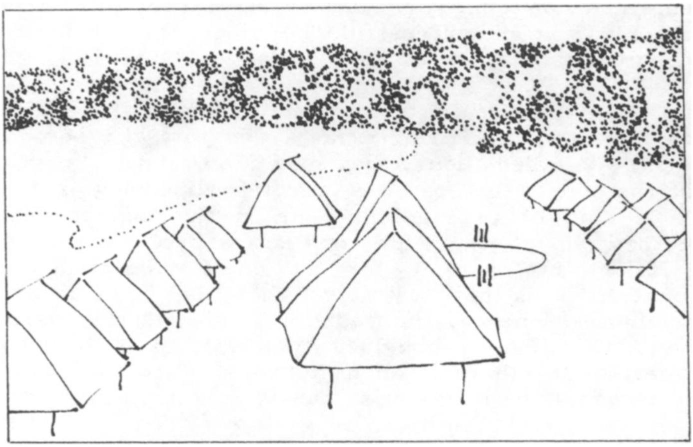

Figure 4: Village of Aru'Bjab, Yamdéna, showing three **suan** (after Drabbe 1940: photograph 67).

Given that the ridge-poles of buildings always run east-west (Drabbe 1940:34-36), the three rows of houses discernible in Figure 4 would appear to represent three *suan* (village quarters) which are at the same time *ndur-lolat*, "rows of wife-takers." This would account for how the grove of coconut trees also "follows the deceased" in being passed on to the wife-takers, since wife-takers are associated with the West and wife-givers with the East.

Finally, what is to be made of the connection between alliance and cognition? We have seen that the mother's brother is thought to possess the power to perceive spirit as well as substance when entranced, and that he may pass on his power to his uterine nephew. We have also seen that the wife-giver's gift of female ornaments at a funeral empowers the deceased to see and converse with the other souls of the dead. We know that death is associated with God calling in his debts, and that when someone dies, it is said that God has "eaten the person" (*nain tomwatte*). Although "eating" is an extremely concrete metaphor, its meaning is highly abstract. "When they speak of feeding God in sacrificing," and, presumably, of God feeding himself when he lets someone die, "they say that God eats the things they sacrifice: *nain*. He eats however not the thing itself, but only the soul thereof: *smangat*, or likewise *valun*, the image thereof; meaning by both words a vague, they know themselves not what" (Drabbe 1940:429). While the Tanimbarese may not be explicit about these notions of "soul" and "image," they do state that all that remains of a sacrificial object or a person who has died is the *mbenbun kape*, "the empty husk" (Drabbe 1940:39, 422). Thus, the Tanimbarese distinguish between husk and kernel, body and soul, object and image, and, in the final analysis, between container and content.

Everything in Tanimbarese culture may be expressed in terms of the relation between a container and its content. This proposition is as much true of the village (*pnuan* means both "village" and "sheath of a sword") as it is of the individual. For example, the seer who sits before the household altar to receive spirit is called "the boat of the ancestors" (Geurtjens 1941:12), and of a pregnant woman it is said:

> She binds so as to go on a distant journey, wherein "binding" means to make preparations since in journeying by proa [a type of sailing boat] one of the foremost preparations was to see to the binding of the proa. The connexion with pregnancy consists in [the notion] that after the journey the proa was full of imported objects; in ordinary speech it is also said that proa *nlend kabyanir*, contain things. (Drabbe 1940:270)

The sailing-boat is thus symbolically equivalent to the womb, and both of these images, or "concomitant forms," like the image of the house, may be regarded as expressions of *the* archetype of Tanimbarese culture: the image of a container, the contents of which are always precious (Howes n.d.). Indeed, so pervasive is this archetype that even alliance relations are conceived of in terms of their contents, and the parties to an alliance are represented as the containers of that content (the second law of Tanimbarese symbolism). However, it should not be inferred from this that the Tanimbarese tend to reify relationships, since for them "thinghood," like personhood, *is* a relationship (Howes 1980). Just as things are only cognizable to the extent that they contain or are contained within things other than themselves, persons are regarded as subjects only insofar as they participate in relationships.

NOTES

1. The research on which this article is based was made possible by a Commonwealth Scholarship. I would like to thank Professor Rodney Needham of All Souls College, Oxford

University and Dr. David Turner of Trinity College, Toronto, for having introduced me to many of the interpretive constructs I have attempted to apply in this article.

2. All definitions of native terms in this section are derived from Drabbe's dictionaries of the languages spoken on Yamdéna (1932a) and Fordata (1932b).

3. This interpretation is consistent with Barraud's analysis of the word *haratut*, "the hundred catches," in the context of Keiese collective thought (1979:60-66). *Haratut*, a collective appellation, is a kind of conceit which the society of Tanebar-Evav has of itself whereby the living are represented as the quarry of the ancestors. This explains why so many terms denoting different levels of the social organization have the image of a container among their connotations. The containers are the means by which the ancestors "capture" the living--i.e., fix them within an immutable cadre. On Yamdéna, the term *inarut*, literally "the hundred fish," is used to designate "the main walk of the village" (Drabbe 1940:50), which suggests that the same conceit has a certain resonance in Tanimbarese thought.

4. On Tanebar-Evav, the senior brother occupies the right side of the house, and this association with the right is a sign of his superior status. In Barraud's terms, this status militates against the development of an "egalitarian patrilinearity." On Yamdéna, the sea-side of the house is superior to the land-side, and the rear of the house is superior to the front. However, Drabbe does not state where the senior brother's room is located. His silence with respect to status distinctions of this sort may be indicative of a more "egalitarian patrilinearity," insofar as the *internal order* (or domestic life) of the house is concerned.

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