

An Introduction to Van den Hoek's Unpublished Manuscript 'Marriage alliance in Sumatra viewed in the light of the Panji theme' (1976)

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In the course of the 20th century, Indonesian societies time and again proved to be a privileged testing ground for social anthropological theories of socio-cosmological systems [1] [2]. The holistic model of 'primitive classification' proposed by E. Durkheim and M. Mauss (1903), accounting for the interdependence of social and cosmological orders, inspired both F. D. E. van Ossenbruggen's (1916) perceptive description of the Javanese classification system *monca-pat* and W. H. Rassers' (1922) analysis of the dualist thought pervading the Javanese *Panji* mythical complex. [3] Comparably close connections between social morphology and mythical and ritual structure were subsequently identified by F. A. E. van Wouden (1935) in his celebrated comparative study of Eastern Indonesian 'types of social structure'. He perceived the socio-cosmological order in the region to be predicated on an interdependence of asymmetric alliance relations in the domain of social order and dualistic principles which prevailed in societies' rituals and cosmologies. In the same year, J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong (1935) argued that these structural features identify the entire Indonesian 'field of ethnological study'. Hence when C. Lévi-Strauss' (1949) conceptualised systems of marriage alliance to be predicated on the direct or indirect 'exchange of women', Leiden scholars remarked on the lack of attention paid to dualist principles informing Indonesian

systems of double-unilineal descent ('double descent') and the mutual transfer of 'male' and 'female' gifts in alliance relationships. Lévi-Strauss acknowledged these phenomena but considered them "logically redundant" (Vermeulen 1987; cp. Tjon Sie Fat 1990: 20). However, an enlightening example of the conjunction between systems of asymmetric alliance and dualistic, cosmologically grounded systems of social organisation was subsequently presented in P.E. de Josselin de Jong's (1951) sophisticated study of Minangkabau society in Sumatra; yet such a co-occurrence of dualist systems of classification with ternary systems of affinal relations was subsequently questioned again by van Wouden (1956). His empirical research of the eastern Indonesian society of Kodi suggested that 'double descent' and 'asymmetric alliance', while being theoretically compatible, might in fact be mutually exclusive modes of social organisation. And whereas in 1933 J. C. Vergouwen still had suggested that double descent had prevailed in conjunction with asymmetric exchange among Toba Batak of Sumatra, D. S. Moyer, scrutinizing the relative importance of double descent versus alliance relations in Minangkabau, Toba-Batak and South Sumatran societies questioned whether "[...] double unilineality and exchange principles are related principles. However, they are related in an antithetical and opposed manner which makes it unlikely for them to occur in their strongest forms simultaneously' (Moyer 1976:4).

It is against the theoretical reflections and debates all too summarily presented here, that the present essay is to be appreciated. Written in October 1976 by A. W.(Bert) van den Hoek, a highly gifted student of P. E. de Josselin de Jong at Leiden university, it casts a new light on the theoretical interpretation of the phenomena addressed above. Critically reassessing Rassers' analysis of the Javanese *panji* complex, Vergouwen's interpretation of the Toba Batak system of descent and alliance, and above all P. E. de Josselin de Jong's intricate model of Minangkabau's dualist phratry and ternary asymmetric alliance relationships, he advances a novel interpretation of the interconnections between descent and alliance in Sumatra. He thereby contributed to the discussions conducted by representatives of the Leiden tradition following their reception of the ideas disseminated in the *Année Sociologique*.

Once it had been submitted to – and much appreciated by – P. E. de Josselin de Jong, the manuscript was laid aside when van den Hoek shifted his focus to the Indian continent. In 1977, after having completed a field study in Madurai, South India, he spent half a year in Paris. There he analysed his research data on South Indian myth and rituals under the guidance of Louis Dumont at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and Madeleine Biardeau at the Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud (CEIAS). When the Dutch language manuscript of the present essay surfaced from among van den Hoek's estate papers, the editors decided to prepare an English language publication.

Van den Hoek's untimely accidental death in 2001, much regretted by his peers and colleagues at Leiden university and beyond, preclude us from debating his interpretation, however much we as editors would have enjoyed doing so. In preparing the English translation we have refrained from intervening in any way in a text written almost fifty years ago. As David Moyer once observed: "[...] the practice of removing blemishes from the

original or trying to tidy up the terminology while editing a translation, impedes the study of Dutch intellectual history” (1977: 340).

As it stands, this essay is a token of our great respect for and fond memory of Bert.

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[2] Sjoerd Zanen and Jos Platenkamp were fellow students of Bert van den Hoek in the 1970s and '80s. Jos Platenkamp received his PhD degree in anthropology in Leiden in 1988. There he taught social anthropology until his appointment to the chair of ethnology at the University of Münster, Germany, in 1993. He applies Dutch and French structural theory in his field researches in Indonesia and Laos and pursues comparative analyses of modern and non-modern social systems. Sjoerd Zanen conducted research with Bert van den Hoek in Lebanon, Sudan, India and Nepal. He received his PhD degree in Leiden in 1996. For the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs he focused on the cultural dimension of development and spent twenty years in Africa. His research on cultural systems of meaning is inspired by the Leiden tradition in structural anthropology.

[3] The history of the so-called 'Leidse Richting' in social anthropology has been the subject of several publications. Here we mention P. E. de Josselin de Jong (ed.) 1977; J. Karremans & R. de Ridder (eds) 1987; M. Prager 1996; Th. Beaufils 1997; M. Prager & P. Ter Keurs 1998; P. Berger 2009.