# PUBLIC LECTURE: LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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> Origin, descent and precedence in the study of Austronesian societies, Public Lecture in connection with De Wisselleerstoel Indonesische Studien given on the 17th of March 1988, Leiden.

I would like to begin this lecture by acknowledging something of my 'origins' and in particular my intellectual indebtedness to a former Professor of this University whose works I purchased on the first day that I arrived in the Netherlands as a visiting graduate student from Oxford. (I might add, parenthetically, that that was a time when even poor graduate students could easily afford to purchase major works published by E.J. Brill of Leiden.)

From that first visit until now, I have continued to refer to those books that I bought and despite almost constant use, I must still admit that I have not yet begun to exhaust their content. It is therefore, with enormous respect, that I acknowledge my debt to Professor Mr Dr Johan Christoph Gerard Jonker who was Professor in Leiden for ten years from 1909 to 1919.

Initially, Jonker combined the study of law and language. After his promotion as doctor in law in 1882, he prepared a second doctoral dissertation, in 1885, on an old Javanese law treatise comparing this lawbook with Indian sources. Shortly thereafter, he and his wife set off for the Netherlands Indies and there, for over fifteen years, he served as a '*taal-ambtenaar*', eventually leaving the Indies only because of ill health. In 1909, on the basis of his doctoral research, Jonker was elected Professor of Javanese at Leiden.

Jonker's professorship was remarkable and, in its way, was a tribute to the extraordinary academic wisdom of a great University, for during the entire tenure of his professorship, Jonker did relatively little, if any, research on Javanese and certainly never published on the language. Instead he continued until his death to do research and to publish major works on the languages of Eastern Indonesia and on comparative Austronesian linguistics. In particular, he continued his research on the language of the tiny island of Roti in Eastern Indonesia.

As Jonker makes explicit in his Rottineesche spraakkunst (1915), his goal was to provide for Rotinese the most comprehensive description ever attempted of any Malayo-Polynesian language. For Jonker, comprehensiveness entailed comparison. His study of Rotinese thus provided him the means for comparative discourse on other Austronesian languages.

It was to Roti that I went to do my first research and it was in the study of Rotinese that I established a bond with Jonker. I have since gone on to do research on other islands of Indonesia but I have discovered, just as Jonker discovered, that once you begin with Rotinese, you never cease.

One advantage of working on Rotinese, with and through the works of Jonker, is the continual reference to comparative linguistic forms from Eastern and Western Indonesia, from the Philippines and the Pacific. For me, this study provided a first step to a study of Austronesian languages and societies.

## II

Having acknowledged the origin of some of the influences on my thinking, I would like now to examine some of the origins of one of the key concepts of anthropology, namely, the concept of 'descent' or, as in Dutch, the concept of '*afstamming*'. In Dutch and in English, this concept involves an implicit spatial metaphor — 'a downward trajectory: a derivation from above'. My intention is to examine this underlying spatial image as a cultural construct and to consider — by a few selected glimpses — the history of its formation.[1]

An appropriate starting point for this historical disquisition is one of the earliest and most influential texts on kinship for Western civilization: The Institutes of Justinian first promulgated in AD 533. In Book III, Tit. VI occurs the following passage: (Here I have adapted the excellent modern translation by J.A.C. Thomas to include crucial Latin terms, without which it would be impossible to understand my argument. Good translations of historical works often render into our idiom ideas that were only beginning to take shape.)

> At this juncture, it is necessary to explain how the degrees of kindred [gradus cognationis] are counted. And, in the first place, we should remember that some relationship is ascendant [supra], some descendant [infra], and some collateral [ex transverso], which gets its name from 'side' (latus). Ascendant relationship [superior cognatio] is that of parents, descendant [inferior] that of children, and collateral [a transverso] that of brothers and sisters and their respective issue as also that of a paternal or maternal uncle or aunt. Both ascendant [superior] and descendant [inferior]

relationship start in the first degree and collateral [ex transverso] starts in the second degree (Thomas 1975:178-179).

By reference to this system of reckoning, canon law and early civil law determined prohibitions on marriage as well as rules of inheritance. The system may seem familiar but it is not our own. Kinship relations are reckoned as superior, inferior and transverse. The concept of descent may be implicit (and is certainly made explicit by the translation), but neither the concept nor the terms for descent had yet developed.

Given the structure of this system, it is not surprising that its earliest and most common representation in the Middle Ages was a cross (see the plates in Patlagean 1966). As we trace the emergence of the idea of descent, we can also trace changes in the imagery used to represent kinship relations. The dominant image changes from a cross to a tree.

The idea of a kinship tree is already evident in the sixteenth century and perhaps even earlier but the full transformation of cross into tree and the exclusive representation by a tree image occurs in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

As early evidence of the idea of this tree, I would quote two lines from the popular sixteenth century Elizabethan work, Divine weekes and works (1590-1606), a translation by the English poet, Joshua Sylvester, of a French poetic composition, La semaine by Guillaume Salluste du Bartas:

> So far the branches of his fruitful Bed
> Past all the names of Kindreds-Tree did spread.

A crucial step in the formation of the concept of descent occurred in the reign of Elizabeth I. This was the promulgation by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Reverend Matthew Parker, first in 1560 and then in 1563, of 'An admonition to all such as shall intend hereafter to enter the state of matrimony, godly and agreeable to laws'. This official Church document remained firmly based on Justinian's gradus cognationis but translated the system of superior, inferior, and transverse relations into a system — still phrased in a form of Latin — of 'lines of ascent and descent', thus: 'primus gradus in linea recta descendente' or 'secundus gradus in linea recta ascendente'. A seemingly simple paraphrase thus effected a major conceptual change.

A further step in the formation of the concept of descent was made by Sir

Edward Coke in his Commentary on Littleton's Treatise on Tenures, prepared in 1628. In this work, which formed The first part of the Institutes of the Lawes of England, Coke published a table again combining Latin and English kinship terminology. This table, entitled Gradus parentelae and consanguinitatis [The degrees of parentage and of consanguinity], continues to reflect the influence of Justinians's gradus cognationis but instead of taking the shape of a cross, the table is focussed on a dapper English Propositus (or, as we would say now, the Ego of the kinship diagram).

More important still is that Coke's Table is not arranged as a cross but centres on a recta linea, a 'direct line', that ascends and descends from his elegant ego with two side lines, designated as *agnati ex parte patris* and *cognati ex parte matris*.[2]

From this system, a translation into general English usage was possible. Sir Mathew Hale, who became Lord Chief Justice of England, could write, around 1670, on the 'course of Descents' in his History of the Common Law of England and eventually publish his 'arbor civilis' to represent 'paternal' and 'maternal' lines of descent that became henceforth enshrined in English law.

A few years thereafter another Chief Justice of England, Lord North, perhaps with the image of Coke's manly propositus in mind, asserted the 'obligation upon every man to provide for those which descend from his loins; and as the administrator is to discharge all other debts; so this debt to nature should likewise exact a distribution, to all that descend from him in the lineal degrees, be they never so remote' (Carter versus Crawley, May 25, 1681).

The system of determining these degrees of descent became known in England as the Law or Canon of Descents. How far they were to be calculated led to the writing of one of the most important tracts on kinship in English history.

In 'An essay on collateral consanguinity' written in 1750, the eminent jurist and scholar, William Blackstone, formulated a clear distinction between 'lineal consanguinity' and 'collateral consanguinity'. The essay was written for a practical purpose. In establishing the College of All Souls at Oxford in 1438, Archbishop Chichele had stipulated a degree of preference should be accorded his kinsmen. Blackstone, as a scholar and as bursar of All Souls, became involved in the controversy on how to interpret this kin-preference some three hundred years after it had been established.

'Genus, in its proper signification', according to Blackstone, 'comprehends only

a man's lineage, or direct descendants of his body' (p.141). Since, however, Archbishop Chichele was unmarried, his only kinsmen were his collateral relations. Blackstone's argument involved showing that such collateral kinship has no bounds.

> all consanguinity is reciprocal; my nephew or cousin is as much related to me, as I am to him, and so vice versa ... If therefore we may be allowed to descend infinitely, we must also by parity of reason be allowed to ascend; and by ascending higher and higher, must at last reach our common parent; and, by adopting all that have sprung from his loins as founder's kinsmen, take in the whole race of mankind (p.148-149).

Since the reverend founder recognized Adam as the father of mankind, his kinsmen included all of mankind; his stipulated preference for kinsmen could therefore be interpreted as a universal declaration rather than partial inclination or consideration. As such, no one is specially preferred for a Fellowship at All Souls.

In his essay, Blackstone produced a 'Table of Collateral Consanguinity' to illustrate his arguments and in particular to distinguish the different ways by which canon law and civil law calculated degrees of collateral relations.

The implicit significance of these systems of reckoning was fundamental: canon law sanctioned an ancestor-based kin group, common law an ego-centric kin group. The 'degrees' of consanguinity in the two systems did not coincide nor did the two systems define the same set of kinsmen. In his polemic against the infinite extension of collateral relations, Blackstone devalued collaterality and overcame the differences between the two systems by giving prominence to lineal descent.[3] Later, in an Essay on Descents and in his Commentaries on the Laws of England, Blackstone was more explicit:

> Lineal consanguinity is that which subsists between persons, of whom one is descended in a direct line from the other ... This is the only natural way of reckoning the degrees in the direct line, and therefore universally obtains, as well in the civil, and canon, as in the common law (vol.II:203).

Not only did Blackstone develop the notion of descent, particularly lineal descent, he produced in his schematic 'Table of Consanguinity' — based on the arbor consanguinitas and arbor civilis — the first diagram of consanguinity. And it is possible to trace direct descent from this diagram to the diagrams used by lawyer-scholar, Lewis Henry Morgan, in his grand opus, Systems of consanguinity and affinity of the human family (1870). Morgan's diagrams of English and Roman consanguinity are extended versions of Blackstone's diagrams. To represent the consanguinity of the Seneca Iroquois and of the Tamil of South India, Morgan has retained Blackstone's descent diagrams but has twisted them into new forms to

explicate very different systems of relationships.

The point — so visually clear in Morgan but less apparent in the works of other anthropologists — is that virtually all analysts from the nineteenth century onward have approached the study of other societies with an implicit idea and image. As I have tried to indicate in a cursory way, this idea is an historical construct that now seems so 'natural' as to be beyond dispute. Our interest in 'descent' as a definable anthropological topic, our concern to trace relations from 'apical' ancestors, our diagrams of segmentary lineages, our taxonomic trees, many of our kinship charts, our family trees — or in Dutch, *stambomen* — all betray implicit notions of a trajectory from above, which we define as 'descending'.

### III

In our accepted understanding of the notion, all societies must, it would seem, have 'descent' — however it may be recognized. This appears so self-evident as to be both natural and universal. Recognition of relationships within the family testifies to a minimal awareness of descent. And if some societies extend neither interest nor awareness of descent much beyond the family, we can invoke a notion of 'genealogical amnesia' to satisfy ourselves in regard to this apparent lack.

When we turn to the study of the Austronesian-speaking peoples, it is apparent that reliance on a notion of descent does not provide an altogether satisfactory concept for general comparison. A large number of Austronesian societies have undifferentiated descent, which is to say that they do not have descent systems: the paraphernalia of such social groupings as lineages and clans. Deriving from Lewis Henry Morgan via the American anthropologist, George Peter Murdock, the term 'Hawaiian' has been adopted by some anthropologists to refer to an entire class of these supposedly undifferentiated systems. For the rest of the Austronesians, who have 'descent groups', a diverse terminology has been put forward to describe these groups. There are patrilineal and matrilineal systems, double unilineal descent systems, and bilineal systems as well as non-unilinear systems, quasi-unilinear systems, status lineages, conical clans, stocks, and ramages.

Here I do not wish to call into question the relative appropriateness of descriptive analyses of particular Austronesian societies. Were I to do this, I would have to call into question my own descriptions of the societies of Roti, Savu, and

Ndao. Rather, what I wish to ask is whether there is something common to all Austronesian societies, which manifests itself in some societies as 'structures' which we label as 'descent', but in other societies manifests itself in structures that appear quite different. Were this to be the case, then in a certain sense, our concern with 'descent' as a critical variable would constitute a beguiling, but misleading model for the comparative study of the Austronesians.

I want to advance this idea initially by reference to a number of societies in Eastern Indonesia. In the process, I want to consider another image of the 'arbor' or 'tree', although not necessarily the 'arbor consanguinitas'.

The verbal expression of this tree-image involves the elaboration of metaphor. In my view, we must shift our attention from models to metaphors — from the construction and application of typologies to the exegesis of basic cultural symbols — if we are to advance the comparative study of the Austronesians. Thus it is from the perspective of a new kind of 'tree', that I wish to offer an altered view of at least some Austronesian societies.

I begin with one Rotinese root term, *hu-*, cited at length over several pages in Jonker's Rottineesch-Hollandsch woordenboek. *Hu* (-k/n) refers to the 'trunk' or 'base' of a tree. Thus, the root *hu* (-k) is used for example as a 'counter term' for the enumeration of trees: literally, one-trunk of tree ... two trunk of tree. *Hu-* has the further meaning of 'base, cause, origin'. As such, it offers a key to Rotinese epistemology. Assured knowledge involves a knowledge of origins. To explain something without explaining its *hu* is no explanation at all. Hence the idea of *hu-*, the trunk of the matter, is implicated in all ideas of social and cultural identity. For want of a better term, I refer to the configurations of such basic identities as 'origin structures'.

Rotinese recognize various origin structures and I shall discuss only two. Every Rotinese recognizes a maternal line of affiliation. The principal figures who stand in this line, which is also referred to as 'the path of life', are the *to'o-huk*, 'mother's brother of origin' and the *ba'i-huk*, the 'mother's mother's brother of origin'. If a person on Roti does not ceremonially acknowledge this line of affiliation, he or she is regarded, as the Rotinese say, like certain epiphytic climbing plants that grow upon large trees without a trunk or root of their own.

I might add that the Rotinese translate the term, *hu*, as '*akar*' in keeping with

common conventions of the local Malay dialect known as Basa Kupang (and, I believe, with conventions of Ambonese Malay as well). Thus, requests about ancestral origins are phased as '*Akar lu dimana*?'

In contrast to this limited, personal three-generational form of origin structure, the Rotinese recognize origin structures of great complexity and duration. These origin structures are based on the lengthy enumeration of a succession of genealogical names of the ancestors of the clans and lineages that compose particular domains.

In a Rotinese domain, such as that of Termanu, which I studied in some detail, clans constituted the enduring political organization of the domain, and formerly, they celebrated their origin in relation to the central ruling clan.

This celebration was the chief ritual of the domain and proceeded in a cycle of performances which were collectively named *Hus*: 'Origin' or 'Celebration of Origin'. Each performance was named after a particular clan (*leo*): Hu Ingu Beuk, Hu Nggofa Laik, Hu Meno, and so on. The major performance was that of the ruling clan and was referred to as Hu Masa Huk, which, if I may use two senses of the word, *hu*, could be translated as the 'Origin Celebration of the Foundation Clan'.

The *Hus* provided the principal context at which 'origins' could be recited. Through recitation of ancestral names, the ancestors were 'brought down' to attend the festivities. Despite this notion of 'descent', the names of the ancestors were recited from the first, founding ancestor of the clan. This was not, as we would say, an 'apical ancestor' but rather the 'base' or 'trunk' ancestor from which other later ancestors derived. Such recitations generally took place on a raised platform of stones set around a large tree, itself an icon of the clan.

Here we have the conception of an ancestral tree, which is the opposite of that of the West: instead of being read from the top down, as a form of descent, it is read from the bottom up as a kind of ascent — from trunk to tip.

There is something almost classic about Rotinese 'descent systems'. Societies with roughly comparable concerns about genealogical names are more common in Polynesia than they are in most of Eastern Indonesia. Nor is the information that these genealogical names convey trivial: the last — most recent — twelve names (out of a succession of over thirty names) recited in the oral traditions of Termanu for the royal line in Masa Huk can be identified and accurately dated in Dutch archival records going back to the 1660s when the Dutch East India Company contracts were first

concluded with the rulers of Roti.

It is also possible to describe Roti in terms of a system of double unilineal descent. In these terms, it might be possible to discern a male or 'patrilineal line of descent' by which clans and lineages are structured; and, what I refer to as lines of maternal affiliation could be interpreted as 'matrilineal descent'. My reasons for not developing this form of analysis will become clearer as I proceed to my next examples.

Equally appropriate examples can be drawn from the Weyewa of west Sumba or the Atoni Pah Meto of west Timor. I begin with a short quotation from a paper by the anthropologist, Joel Kuipers, writing about his fieldwork among the Weyewa:

> I remember being mildly disappointed after arriving and learning that the prodigious feats of genealogical memory reported for the neighbouring island of Roti were quite absent among the Weyewa ... I recall my sense of disappointment developing into a sense of puzzlement and curiosity. I heard that certain individuals were experts at 'remembering' the past, but when I contacted them, what I got were not genealogies, but long lists of place names (1985:1).

Interestingly, however, remembering in Weyewa is phrased — as it is on Roti — in terms of a relationship between 'trunk' or 'base' (Weyewa: *pu'una*) and 'tip'. The image of this remembering involves a similar but simpler botanic icon. As Kuipers writes: '... Weyewa liken faithful kinsmen who 'remember' their ancestors to creepers of gourds and climbing plants which retain a connection to their 'source' (*mata*)' (1985:3). To rediscover forgotten ancestral obligations, Weyewa call upon diviners. Kuipers writes:

> The diviners' goal is to trace 'the path that was traveled' that is, not only their history of spatial and temporal migration away from their ancestors, but the history of kinship relations to the ancestral source (1985:5).

Here Kuipers describes a kind of 'origin structure' that is similar to 'origin structures' on Roti. Both rely on cognate linguistic forms and similar imagery. In one, there is a succession of genealogical names; in the other, there is an equivalent progression of place names. The one, largely temporal in structure, supposedly describes a 'descent' system whereas the other, casting temporal relations on a spatial axis, is less easily definable in terms of descent. If anything, I would say that the Weyewa 'origin structure' is of more common occurrence in Eastern Indonesia than is the genealogical structure of the Rotinese.

My next example comes from my own research among the Atoni Pah Meto of west Timor. The Atoni are linguistically and culturally closely related to the Rotinese,

who are their closest neighbours to the west. One might, therefore, expect similarities between these two populations. Unfortunately, given the present models used to classify societies in Eastern Indonesia, the Rotinese and Atoni appear to be quite different. Rotinese with any claims to status pride themselves on long genealogies, whereas for the Timorese, genealogical knowledge becomes hazy after two or three generations and even the great Lords of Timor rarely proclaim genealogies that go beyond about four generations.

On the other hand, all Timorese possess terminological systems predicated on symmetric marriage alliance. Within these prescriptive structures, wife-giver and wife-taker relationships are pivotal to all social action. By contrast, the Rotinese have neither a prescriptive terminology nor prescriptive alliance. At best, some domains have 'proscriptive' systems. Without prescription, marriages continually create new wife-giver/wife-taker relationships. These shifting relationships are not as pivotal to social action as in the case of the Atoni.

Each domain on Roti has named clans and lineages that are confined to that domain and can be described as 'patrilineal'. By contrast, Timorese clans that share certain common names (and rituals) are scattered throughout all of western Timor and their internal 'descent structures' do not conform to lineal criteria. As a result of these apparent differences, if one were writing an anthropological textbook on Eastern Indonesia, the Rotinese and Atoni would almost certainly be discussed in entirely different chapters.

If, however, one were to consider the 'origin structures' of these two societies, they appear similar enough to one another that either can be seen as a transformation of the other.

Both Atoni and Rotinese, for example, recognize similar origin structures of long and of short duration. Thus the 750,000 Atoni are divided into as many as 400 to 500 distinct groups: these groups are distinguished by the sharing of a common name (*kanaf*; or in Timorese ritual language, *kanaf ma bonif*); in the literature, these 'name-groups' are generally called 'clans'. Implied in the possession of a common set of names is the sharing of a common origin. The Timorese identify this as their *uf*, a cognate form of the same Austronesian root term for 'base', 'trunk', 'origin' as among the Rotinese.

Atoni clans are scattered throughout west Timor. In any local area, one

encounters only a small selection and concentration of particular clans. In and among the mountains of Timor are the origin places of scattered Atoni clans. Generally, these origin places are unusual rocky outcrops (*fatu* or in ritual language, *fatu ma hau*, 'rock and tree'). The clustering of the majority of these origin places in eastern areas of central west Timor suggests an expansion in the past several hundred years of Timorese mainly westward and northward from their previous homeland.

Concern with clan origins is no less pronounced in Timor than it is on Roti. However, instead of tracing social origins by means of a succession of genealogical names, Atoni trace their origins spatially as the journey of a single name — a single entity or collective ego — who wanders through a landscape of place names.

Here what we would call 'history' is not based on genealogical time. Atoni 'history' is 'the path and the road' (*enon ma lanan*) and those who recite this history express it collectively and personally as 'my path and my road' (*au enok ma au lanak*). Metaphorically, this history is a path from trunk to tip. Along this path, however, the role of certain ruling clans is not just one of wandering but rather of meeting and ordering other clans in the creation of domains.

In my experience in gathering clan histories among the Atoni, one must first record the 'trunk' before the 'tip'. This may require a journey with one's informant to a place of origin to hear someone else recite the beginning of the history.

Atoni — like the Rotinese — use this same metaphor to describe origin structures of a relatively shorter duration. Every Atoni settlement must have a *koin tuaf* who is referred to as the *uf* — 'trunk or origin' — of that settlement. In theory, this *uf* represents the clan whose original ancestor founded the settlement, the right to do so having been delegated either from the centre or from a clan of higher authority in the area. To gain admission to the settlement and to rights to land around the settlement, each incoming clan has to be related to the settlement's *uf*.

To retain its position of precedence, the *koin tuaf* group as the founder line of the settlement must give women to other clans in the settlement. Generally such a *koin tuaf* establishes a fixed wife-giver relationship with the first and, possibly, the second incoming clan. These clans in turn become wife-givers to other clans, creating in a well-ordered settlement a clear line of precedence emanating from the *koin tuaf* as wife-giver, atoin amaf, and as *uf*. This line is structurally equivalent to the Rotinese line of maternal affiliation, but phrased in terms of an idiom of quasi-permanent wife-

giver/wife-taker relations.

In reality, these relations are never permanent: by reversing the direction of marriage, which is possible within the Atoni symmetric system, a clan can advance its position of precedence in the settlement. This can occur at any position within the line: a *koin tuaf* who takes a wife from another clan within his settlement ceases to be *uf* since he must acknowledge his wife-giver as the new *uf*: his 'trunk' or 'origin' and hence the new 'trunk' of the settlement.

Similar analyses can be extended to other closely related groups in the Timor area. One such analysis exists for the Mambai of East Timor. Elizabeth Traube in a shortly to be published paper, 'Obligations to the source', has examined the social and symbolic implications of the arboreal metaphor of trunk and tip. I would like to quote a few compiled excerpts from this long and detailed paper:

> the Mambai make extensive use of the botanical categories of *fu* and *lau*. *Fu* is a cognate of a single Austronesian term meaning 'trunk', 'base', 'origin' or 'source'. It can be used in the sense of 'beginning' or 'cause'. *Lau* signifies 'tip', 'peak', 'crown', or 'extremity'. It is used in reference to the uppermost or outermost limit of objects that stand fixed in place, and also to represent the culmination of temporal processes, with the sense of 'end', 'outcome', or 'result'... For Mambai, the relations between *fu* and *lau* are exemplified in a tree, which can be conceived of both as a product and as a process... Trunks come before the branching tips they support, and the multiple usages of *fu* and *lau* work simultaneously to temporalize space and to spatialize time (pp.6-7).

## IV

Rather than continue to pursue comparisons within a small area of Eastern Indonesia, I would to like to build upon what I have so far said and cautiously advance some proposals for alternative ways of comparison among the Austronesians. I began by looking at how ideas and images of 'descent' developed in the West and, as a result, seem 'naturally' to have disposed anthropologists to look for and to give special comparative attention to different kinds of 'descent' structures. As an alternative to this comparative program, I suggested that we focus our attention instead on what I called 'origin structures'. To exemplify this alternative form of comparison, I considered several 'origin structures' from the islands of Roti, Sumba and Timor, all of which are based on the metaphor of a tree with trunk and branching tips. My specific purpose was to show how this metaphor, as in the case of Roti, has been elaborated to produce structures that fit certain descent models — even though its polarities are reversed and the system is that of 'ascent' rather than of 'descent'. In other cases, however, such as among the Weyewa or the Atoni Pah Meto, this

metaphor yields structures that are difficult to accommodate with current conceptions of descent.

The category of 'origin' that I focussed on is marked by a specific term that has a variety of reflexes among all the languages of Eastern Indonesia: *Epu*, *Pu*, *Pu'u*, *Hu*, *Uf*, *Fu*. Related to these reflexes are another set of reflexes: *Kepue*, *Puen*, *Puken* (and perhaps another set as well: *Puna*, *Pula*, *Pu'a*.)

All these reflexes link the notion of origin to ideas of 'cause, beginning, source, trunk, and base' often specifically that of the base of a tree: *hau uf* (Timor), *pola pu* (W. Sumba), *ai huk* (Roti). As a consequence, the idea of origin connoted by this term is often — but not always — conceived of in 'botanic' terms, indicating a progressive development from 'trunk' through 'branch' to 'tip'.

In Proto-Austronesian, this root is reconstructed by Dempwolf as *Puhun*. Other constructions, however, yield *Puqun* which appears to be related to Grace's construction, *Puqu(n)* for Proto-Oceanic. The equivalent Proto-Philippine is reconstructed as *Punuq*, which seems to be a possible metathesis. There may, however, be a more basic root, *Pu*, which would link this term to other seemingly related cognate terms, such as the Proto-Austronesian for 'ancestor', — *Empu'* or *(T)umpu* and the Proto-Austronesian for the verb to 'grow' — *Tu(m)buh*, *Tu(m)buq* — which, according to Grace, becomes *Tumpu(q)* in Proto-Oceanic (for these reconstructions, see Wurm and Wilson 1975).[4]

In Javanese, this metaphor is maintained even though it is based on a different set of cognates: *wit*: 'tree'; *wiwitan*: 'beginning, source'.

Whatever the precise linguistic status of these various, possibly related reflexes, they seem to form a cluster of interrelated metaphors which are — at least in some Indonesian societies — the subject of local folk etymological speculation. The various unlikely, and indeed, often absurd, folk etymologies devised by specific groups to enhance connections within symbolic systems must be of special interest to the anthropologist, even though they may appear as so much misleading nonsense to the comparative linguist. To invoke such etymologies is to call upon language itself in support of a symbolic argument. Hence recourse to such etymologies becomes an index of social significance.

The reason that the study of 'origin structures' is so important is that these are not abstract or neutral structures. They exist for a social purpose since they establish

precedence. They determine who is to be first, foremost, elder, superior, greater, or, to occupy the center. They provide symbolic arguments for the varied status systems of the Austronesians. The study of 'origin structures' and of the systems of precedence that they generate should constitute a basic focus for the comparative study of the Austronesians.

## V

In conclusion, allow me to indicate various issues that I have skirted in presenting this lecture. In my discussion of a few ethnographic cases, I was able to examine only one kind of origin structure, that based on a set of seemingly related botanic metaphors. I do not wish to give the impression from this discussion that I consider such constructions to be the predominant form of origin structure among Austronesian-speaking peoples. It is only one among many; its metaphors occur widely and they often blend with metaphors of other origin structures. My interest is in the whole range of these origin structures and their metaphorical elaboration.

It is also worth noting that the origin structures in the ethnographic cases that I have invoked in this lecture relate mainly to persons. Elsewhere among Austronesian-speaking populations, origin structures may be based on other constituents. On Bali, for example, critically important origin structures focus upon temples; whereas, in other societies, similar origin structures may focus on villages or on 'houses'. Nor are origin structures purely of sociological interest. Indeed the tracing of origins is fundamental to an epistemology of knowledge among the Austronesians. Thus, many of the *hikayat*, *babad*, and — as in Rotinese — *tutui tete'ek* that have come down to us are fabulous accounts of origins and, as such, form a special genre of literary 'origin structures'.

Finally, if I may go back briefly to the notion of descent, I would also like to point to other issues that I have not been able to discuss. Trees present protean forms. They can grow up but they can also grow outward. Some, like the *waringan*, can grow up and then set down new roots. Hence, tracing relations using the image of a tree can take many forms. In England, as indeed elsewhere in Europe, in contradistinction to the tracing of descent relations from above, there were alternative notions — stirpes, stock, or, in Dutch, *stam* — that implied reckoning of relationships from the 'root' or 'trunk' of the tree.

Similarly, in various areas of Indonesia, some form of the term, *turun*, 'to descend' is indeed used in tracing relationships. In modern Indonesian, this term now defines the dominant way in which relationships are conceived. Although this term has now been appropriated generally, it may once have been used, in a more restricted sense, by those groups whose ancestors were believed to have come down from on high. The classic instances of this are to be found among the Bugis and Makassarese for whom the *tomanurung* are conceived as original 'descenders' who came down from above to create proper order on earth. The case of the Bugis — and of the Toraja — thus raises the interesting possibility of two ways of reckoning relationships — one from above, the other from below — by different groups within the same society.

In ending with a question that leads to a variety of questions, I wish to emphasize that all that I have tried to do in this lecture is to point to issues of comparative interest for the study of the Austronesian-speaking peoples.

Before I conclude this lecture, I would like to express my thanks to this University for the opportunity to be here. I would also like to express my thanks to particular individuals who have helped on 'my path and my road'. To Professor and Mrs D.J. Kuenen who took me into their home during my first stay in Leiden and helped me to understand some of the workings of this great University. To Professor A. Teeuw, my first teacher in Indonesian, who gave me the wise advice, not to try to study Jonker's Rotineesche spraakkunst until I already had some knowledge of Rotinese. And finally, but foremost, to Professor and Mrs P.E. de Josselin de Jong who have time and again assisted me whenever I have come to Leiden. Patrick, it was on the occasion of your visit to Oxford in 1963 that my tutor announced (before informing me, of course) that I was going to do my research on the island of Roti. In my personal origin structure, you are a central figure and if I appear at times to be an errant student of the Leidse richting, it has not been for want of your good guidance.

Thank you.

## Notes

[1]   Here I would like to acknowledge the stimulation and influence of Professor J. D. Freeman of the Australian National University, whose writings on the concept of the kindred (1961) have prompted my own particular interest in the concept of descent. Professor Freeman has generously shared with me notes from his research on the kindred which have provided me with some of the leads I have followed in tracing, as I have, a few of the stages in the formation of the concept of descent. I would also like to thank Greg Acciaioli for the thorough, critical reading he gave to a draft of this lecture and for the comments he provided me.

2   Coke — as indeed was probably the case with Parker — drew upon the work of two important English jurists, Bracton and Britten. The question to be investigated is to what extent Coke's work is original and to what extent its notions of descent derive from these earlier works.

3   There is more to Blackstone's Essays on Collateral Consanguinity and on Descents than I can deal with here. Suffice it to say that in the reckoning of degrees of relationship for the ego-centric system in English, there were alternative terms (stripes/stock) and an alternative image. Blackstone did not ignore these terms but rather subverted them by reinterpretation to his own ends. The existence of these two systems in the English tradition (and, I believe, in other European traditions) should at least caution us to be wary when we find only one such system elsewhere.

4   In this connection, Robert Barnes has written an interesting paper (Barnes 1979) that considers terms for 'ancestors' based on the root, *Pu*.

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