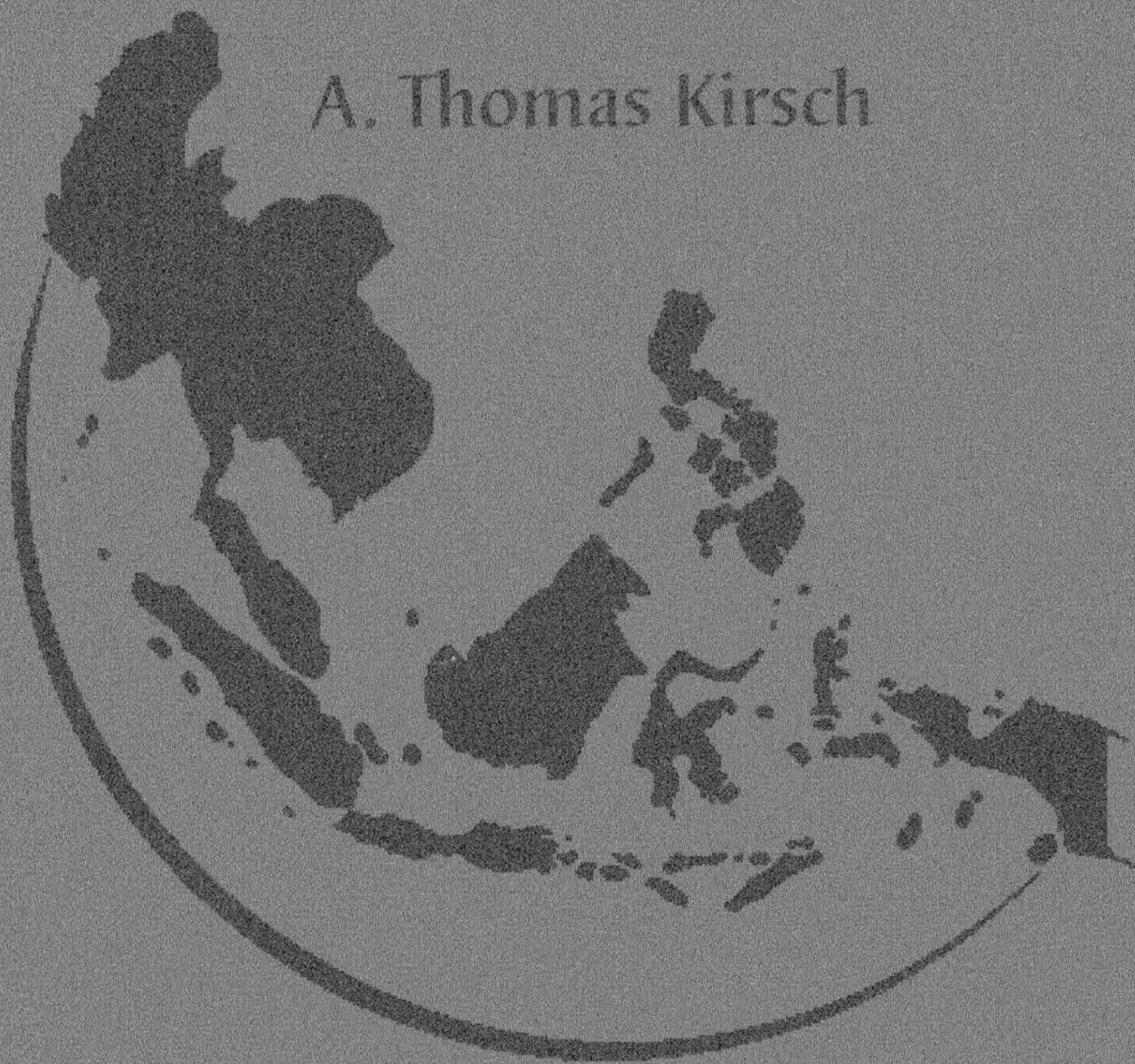




Feasting and Social Oscillation

Religion and Society in Upland Southeast Asia

A. Thomas Kirsch



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PREFACE

This essay was written in 1964 in an effort to combine Leach's insights derived from his study of the Kachin with various aspects of Parsonian sociological theory and to extend this to a number of upland peoples of Southeast Asia. Originally I had hoped to apply the analytical perspective developed here to a program of field research. For a number of reasons this has proven impossible.

Since 1964 I have used a mimeographed version of this essay in a number of courses at Princeton and Cornell to stimulate discussion of various problems of anthropological theory and the ethnography of Southeast Asia. The response of students and the encouragement of a number of colleagues has led me to make the essay more generally available by submitting it to the Cornell Southeast Asia Program Data Paper Series. I would have preferred a thorough revision of the paper to capitalize on more recent research in Southeast Asia and various developments in anthropological theory but time has not permitted. I have rewritten portions of the introductory and concluding sections and added more extensive footnotes and references but the essay appears here substantially in its original form. In line with the guiding philosophy of the Data Paper series this essay is offered as a working paper, a work in progress, in the hopes it will stimulate discussion and future research.

An earlier and much abbreviated version of this paper benefited from the comments of Talcott Parsons and Charles Frake. During the writing of the expanded version Charles Keyes, Eugene Ogan and especially James Peacock provided much needed critical feedback and advice. Cora Du Bois was also kind enough to provide a close critical reading of the expanded manuscript which clarified a number of points. I owe a special debt to the numerous students who have reacted positively to the essay and to my numerous colleagues at Princeton and Cornell both anthropologists and Southeast Asianists who have given me much encouragement.

A.T.K.

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INTRODUCTION

Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma* was first published in 1954 and has deservedly achieved the status of an anthropological classic. In this work Leach skillfully combined historical data and contemporary ethnographic observations and placed them into an elegant analytical model which highlighted a number of significant theoretical questions. Proceeding as he did, Leach was able to discern what had escaped the attention of previous observers of the Kachin. In particular, he saw a degree of dynamism and a pattern of systematic structural change in Kachin society. His observation of an oscillatory pattern in Kachin society led Leach to raise serious questions about the static "equilibrium" assumptions which grounded much of contemporary anthropological theory. In his concluding chapter Leach suggested that his Kachin model might be fruitfully extended to other upland groups in Mainland Southeast Asia (1954: 290-292). In this essay I propose to follow Leach's suggestion and to apply his insights to a number of other groups in the region for which we have extensive data.

Many of the groups which I will consider below show numerous similarities to the Kachin; therefore, many of my assumptions about the functioning of these groups are based directly on Leach's analysis of the Kachin. However, because of somewhat different theoretical interests, some of my assumptions will be different. I will briefly summarize certain aspects of Leach's argument so that the differences in our assumptions will become clear.

Leach notes that the Kachin show two different types of ideal political order, the *gumsa* "autocratic" order and the *gumlao* "democratic" order. He argues that the *gumsa* "autocratic" order is modeled directly after that of the valley-dwelling Shan located nearby the Kachin. Leach argues then that the Kachin have "borrowed" the idea of an autocratic political order and of an autocratic chief from Shan notions of "divine kingship" (1954: 213-219). The gist of Leach's analysis is that there are "inconsistencies" within the ideal order of both *gumsa* and *gumlao* systems which serve to make both highly unstable. Thus, *gumlao* democracy tends to develop into *gumsa* autocracy, and *gumsa* autocracy tends to "break down" (through "revolution") into *gumlao* democracy (1954: 259-263). Kachin society can be seen as continuously oscillating between these two ideal forms of order.

Recognizing that "social structures" are analytical constructs which do not "oscillate" independently of the people who form the social structure, Leach provides a motivational basis to account for the dynamism involved. He assumes that "a conscious or unconscious wish to gain power is a very general motive in human affairs" (1954: 10, 194). Hence, Leach attributes the structural instability exhibited by the Kachin to a desire on the part of individuals for power. By manipulating the inconsistencies in the ideal order, certain individuals achieve this power and become autocratic chiefs; others repudiate this power to form democratic communities (1954: 263).

While this resume does grave injustice to the subtlety of Leach's argument and the skill with which he documents it, it does provide a convenient base for contrasting some of my assumptions with his.

Because of my own theoretical preoccupations I prefer to focus on "religious" phenomena rather than "political" phenomena having to do with "power." This may seem to involve a drastic break with Leach's approach to the Kachin, but actually Leach reminds his readers at various points that the Kachin *gumsa* chief bases his claim to power primarily on his control of religious ritual (1954: 129, 176-177, 189-190). I do not wish to ignore the influence of political (or of economic) factors, I merely wish to relate these factors more specifically to religious factors.¹

1. A more fundamental difference between Leach's approach to the Kachin and that followed in this essay has to do with our differing views of culture and society and the ways in which they are conceived to be interrelated. Leach (1954: 16-17) equates culture with particular form and content; as "accidents of history" which are largely independent of social structures. For Leach it is the underlying structure of a situation rather than its cultural form or content which is really

In fact, the various Southeast Asian groups with which I will deal may be classed in the same categories of "autocratic" and "democratic" used by Leach and I will retain these categories for convenience of reference. Indeed, it is striking that numerous writers representing quite diverse theoretical views make use of these political categories when dealing with the upland peoples of Southeast Asia. Among other things, this suggests that the phenomenon which Leach has analyzed so well for the Kachin may be widespread throughout the area; that is, the oscillatory pattern is a pervasive and a real phenomenon. But, the common use of these political categories may also display a very strong preference on the part of these observers to emphasize "real" factors such as political or economic features at the expense of more "ideal" factors such as the religious.

Aside from emphasizing religious factors, I will also attempt to construct a model which will avoid any overwhelming dependence on external cultural or social influences, such as the notion that the *gumba* autocratic ideal can be accounted for through borrowing aspects of Shan political leadership. This is not to say that external influences play no significant role in shaping the lives of these upland peoples. One of Leach's most notable contributions has been to demonstrate the futility of viewing upland groups such as the Kachin as if they were utterly isolated from lowland influences.² However, I do wish to indicate that the development of the two extreme types of ideal order and the oscillation between them can also be explained by dynamisms which are grounded *within* the cultural systems of the groups under consideration, even though external factors also play an important role. Indeed, if we view the ethnographic literature of upland Southeast Asia through the lens which Leach has provided, it appears that an oscillatory process similar to that manifested by the Kachin is very widespread. If this is the case, then it might be more fruitful to see this pattern as resulting from endemic internal tensions and strains rather than to attribute this development to external contacts alone. In fact, the bulk of Leach's Kachin analysis does emphasize internal "inconsistencies" and "contradictions," but Leach also explicitly states his view that change is ultimately caused by external factors (1954: 212).

In the 1940's, when Leach initiated his study of the Kachin, anthropologists were firmly committed to a distinct methodology which was closely tied to prevailing theory. This methodology involved intensive fieldwork studies which were generally focused narrowly in space and time.³ If the Second World War had not intervened Leach himself observes that he might well have carried out a typical Malinowskian "functionalist" study of the Kachin using this type of methodology (1954: 311-312). He was unable to do so due to the exigencies of the war-time situation. Instead, Leach placed his Kachin study in a much broader spatial and temporal framework than was commonly the case in conventional functionalist studies. Given this broader spatial and temporal framework Leach was able to see the oscillation between ideal forms of organization which other observers, limited to the more conventional narrow spatial and temporal framework, had missed. But, Leach found it difficult to articulate his observation of oscillation in Kachin society with the "equilibrium" assumptions of conventional anthropological theory. Calling this theory into question Leach maintained that societies must be viewed as processes in time and that it is a mistake to overly emphasize the equilibrium of any society (1954: 4-5, 283ff.).

While one can certainly subscribe to Leach's criticisms of conventional theory, his Kachin analysis does not do away with the equilibrium problem altogether (cf. Gluckman, 1963: 35-37; 1968: 219-237). It merely broadens the range within which we

significant. My view of culture and society is based on the distinctions made by Kroeber and Parsons (1958) which have been further elaborated by Parsons (1961, 1966). From this perspective culture is seen as a system of values, conceptions and ideas which shape and control individual action and the structures of society. Viewed in this way culture plays a more dynamic and positive role than as conceived by Leach.

2. This theme of viewing upland peoples in a matrix of other upland and lowland neighboring groups has been developed further by Lehman (1963, 1967a, 1967b) and La Raw (1967).
3. Anthropological field studies were not only carried out in a limited span of time but the results were commonly reported in "the ethnographic present." This device of presentation served not only to perpetuate but to reify the narrow time perspective of conventional theory. By abstracting the anthropologists' observations from the on-going flow of time and history the study of processes of change were inhibited if not completely precluded.

must consider equilibrium processes. Leach's ideal *gumsa-gumlao* models apparently represent the "boundaries" of a range of variation within which Kachin society operates. It is this range of variation which seems to constitute an "equilibrium" system.⁴ Despite Leach's disclaimer, this appears to be the case at *both* the level of "ideas" and the level of "facts" (1964: x). To go "below" the *gumlao* level suggests that the Kachin would necessarily become "more primitive," i.e., maintain a less complex form of social order.⁵ When Kachin go "above" the *gumsa* level, they "become" Shan, i.e., become involved in a more complex and differentiated socio-cultural order. While Leach's analysis indicates that *individual* Kachin can move "back and forth" across this boundary, it also indicates that, despite the conscious or unconscious efforts of chiefs to bring this about, the Kachin *social* order does not cross this boundary. One could conceptualize the Kachin situation in terms of a theory of social evolution in which societies may fluctuate and exhibit regular structural change within a given range without necessarily "evolving."⁶ At any rate, the equilibrium problem is still with us, though in a different form than it took in conventional functionalist theory.

In approaching the Kachin Leach emphasizes "political" factors and stresses the internal inconsistencies and contradictions to be found in Kachin society and culture which influence the oscillation between *gumsa* and *gumlao*. Shifting to a focus on "religious" factors might serve to highlight more general internal systemic consistencies than Leach would allow. It is my view that religion is the repository of cultural values and conceptions which provide the cognitive and affective framework within which social action takes place.⁷ The empirical complexity we find among the Kachin and similar upland groups in Southeast Asia may mask a basic similarity and continuity in religious values and societal variation. That is, there may be a great deal of value continuity amongst these groups, as well as considerable structural variability. This theme will become more clear below.

Finally, let me note that following this essay's shift of emphasis from the political to the religious, I must shift my assumption about the motivational basis of the dynamism found in these upland Southeast Asian societies. My assumption is that the individuals within these groups are seeking for "ritual efficacy," "potency," "enhanced ritual status," or some such religiously defined goal, not seeking simply to possess "political power." There is abundant data from the ethnographic literature that this is in fact a powerful motivational element in all the groups to be discussed. Although ethnographers have consistently reported the importance of religious values and rituals in structuring the activities of the upland peoples, they have tended to underplay or ignore it in their analyses. At any rate, it seems more fruitful to assume a motivational factor which is actually reported in the ethnography rather than substituting one "made up" in Western society. This point requires further amplification.

Leach structures his argument around the problem of "power" in Kachin society, and he also uses economic concepts with great skill. But there is a problem concerning the extent to which it is legitimate to use Western concepts of political and economic functioning which are appropriate to the study of complex modern societies in the study of less complex societies such as the Kachin. Clearly, *all* societies have *some* political and economic elements (as well as kinship and religious elements), but in most of the societies which anthropologists ordinarily study, these political and economic structures are not differentiated from other elements in these societies--whereas in modern societies they are differentiated. That is to say, in "non-modern" (or "simple") societies political and economic structures and functions are

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4. Leach touches directly on some of these issues in his Introductory Note to the Beacon Press edition of *Political Systems of Highland Burma* published in 1964.
 5. Though their precise status is not completely clear it should be noted that such "more primitive" groups are reported to exist in the vicinity of the upland groups under consideration here. For example, see Bernatzik (1938) and Boeles et al (1963).
 6. Anthropological interest in coming to grips with ranges of structural variability has increased in recent years. One such effort involves investigating "developmental cycles" as discussed by Fortes (1949) and Goody (1958). Other works of interest include Gearing's (1958) notion of "structural poses" and Geertz's (1959) discussion of variability in Balinese village structure.
 7. This view of religion is derived from the works of Parsons (1961, 1966), Bellah (1964, 1965, 1968) and Geertz (1957, 1965, 1966). See also note 13 below.

"embedded" in other, *non-political, non-economic* structures and functions. Such "simple" societies are relatively undifferentiated.⁸ For example, the Kachin chief's *political* power is rooted in, and dependent on, his control of *religious* ritual. Or, as will be elaborated below, the religious system provides both motivation for "economic" production and a "proto-marketing" system for the distribution of production. While it is certainly possible, and even illuminating, to apply western political and economic concepts and assumptions to such relatively undifferentiated societies, to do so may also distort our understanding of them and the processes which operate within them. Might it not be more useful to acknowledge and to capitalize on the undifferentiated aspect of these societies rather than to ignore or distort it by applying analytical concepts which are appropriate for the study of highly differentiated societies? It is abundantly clear in the work of Leach and the other ethnographers of this area that the "political" and the "economic" are not differentiated structurally or functionally from the other components of these societies. My argument is that the political and economic are deeply embedded in the religious system, and that this is precisely what the ethnography shows.

Leach himself argues persuasively that in their analyses anthropologists have frequently used terms of greater sophistication and precision than native terms. This tendency may well have stemmed from a particular view of society implicit in the methodology and conditions of conventional anthropological field research (cf. Leach, 1954: 7, 106). Yet one might argue that, by phrasing his own analysis in terms of "political systems" and of "power," Leach is himself imputing attributes to Kachin society which it does not have. Let me illustrate this allegation by citing an example from Leach's own work. In his Chapter V (1954: 108-125) Leach presents a lucid exposition of various Kachin terms, in particular: *nta* "a house" (plus *htingnu* "a chief's house") associated with a *htingaw* "family," "extended family"; *kahtawng* "a village," *mare* "a village cluster" associated with *bu ni* "villagers"; and *mung* "a chief's domain."⁹ In effect, the terms which Leach uses to translate these native terms indicate that he is stressing both the "territoriality" and the "socio-political inclusiveness" of these units. He notes that the Kachin (as well as the Shan) do not associate these units with any particular size. That is, the *mung* which Leach discusses in some detail is basically the same size as the *mare* of many other Kachin *mung*. Yet, while stressing the territorial element of these different units, Leach must refer to Kachin *religious* ideas in order to make clear what these units mean to the Kachin. From the religious perspective, I would emphasize that these various units are ordered on the basis of shared religious ritual and rights to this ritual. While the significance of these ritual rights is clearly involved with the land in some fashion, it is not concerned so much with the particular territory as it is with the religious ritual which is deemed to control the fertility of the area. This is not surprising when we consider that the Kachin practice *swidden* ("shifting") agriculture.⁹ These ritual rights relating to fertility are vested in units of greater or lesser inclusiveness: (a) *nta* "a house," locus of the ritual of a *htingaw* "household," "extended family"--those who worship the same "ancestral spirits"; (b) *kahtawng* "village," locus for the ritual of those who cultivate *swiddens* together and hence share a concern for the fertility of a *swidden* block; (c) *mare* "village cluster,"⁹ two or more *kahtawng* which share a concern for the fertility of an area larger than a single *swidden* block. Both *kahtawng* and *mare* are associated with the aggregate unit *bu ni* "villagers"; (d) *mung* "domain," the unit of greatest ritual inclusiveness in Kachin society. The locus of the *mung* is the "chief" (*duwa*) in whom are vested exclusive rights to sacrifice to the earth and the sky spirits which control the fertility of the area of the *mung*. If one wishes to translate native terms into broadly equivalent western terms it might be more accurate in the Kachin case to conceive of these various units as "churches" or "sects" which are organized into "parishes," with the *mung* equivalent of "dioceses," or, perhaps, in the case of extremely large *mung* of "episcopal sees."⁹ From this perspective we might then note that there is no "papal head" for these units which may have impor-

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8. The relatively low level of differentiation in "primitive" societies and "early empires" has been a basic feature of the so-called substantivist approach to economics as exemplified by Polanyi et al (1957) and Dalton (1960, 1961, 1963). The significance of the relative degree of differentiation in a society is not restricted to the economic sphere and a number of writers have used relative degree of differentiation as a key analytical variable. See for example, Parsons, (1961, 1964, 1966), Gluckman (1962, 1963), Bellah (1964), Eisenstadt (1964), Levy (1966) and Peacock and Kirsch (1970).
 9. See Conklin (1961) for an excellent bibliography on *swidden* agriculture. See also Carneiro (1961), Vayda (1961) and Geertz (1963) for discussions of the social implications of *swidden* agriculture.

tant implications for the "instability" of Kachin society. That is, the Kachin follow an "Eastern Orthodox" rather than a "Roman Catholic" model.¹⁰

Leach remarks on the vagueness and ambiguity of Kachin terms when translated into English; the native concepts are "broader" than our own (1954: 105-106). Hence, to offer alternative "religious" glosses for Leach's "political" glosses may capitalize on this ambiguity in native terms and thereby illuminate aspects of Kachin society which Leach did not stress. Indeed, one might argue that Leach's use of political categories in translating Kachin terms may have introduced a spurious rigor into his analysis. That is, the political categories do not explain the Kachin situation and a certain amount of the "inconsistency" which Leach finds may be located in the terms of his own analysis rather than "in" Kachin society or culture.

At this point let me list those groups to which I will subsequently refer collectively as "hill tribes society" so that it will be clear that I am not concerned here with all the upland peoples of mainland Southeast Asia. The following discussion refers only to the groups I list here and is based primarily on the sources cited for each. These are: The Angami Naga (Hutton, 1921a), The Sema Naga (Hutton, 1921b), The Lhota Naga (Mills, 1922), The Ao Naga (Mills, 1926), The Rengma Naga (Mills, 1937), The Central Chin (Stevenson, 1943), The Lamet (Izickowitz, 1951), and The Kachin (Leach, 1954). Except for the Lamet, all of these groups are located in the North Burma-Assam area and all, with the same exception, are speakers of Tibeto-Burman dialects.¹¹ The Lamet are found primarily in Northern Laos and are classified by Izickowitz (1951: 20-22) as Mon-Khmer speakers. Hence, the Lamet are separated geographically as well as culturally from the other groups listed. Despite this separation the Lamet appear to conform to the analytical model I will sketch out for "hill tribes society." This might suggest that the model of hill tribes society delineates a "natural type" in the sense of Radcliffe-Brown (1957) or a distinct level of "socio-political integration" as discussed by Steward (1955).

Although the various upland groups listed above display numerous extreme differences and variations in terms of particular cultural content, they all conform to a single analytic model. For this to be so it appears that some of the features which they share in common must somehow override the empirical differences in content. That is, the patterns (or processes) found in hill tribes seem to be relatively consistent or are systematically variable. Some of the features which these groups share are: (a) their ecological niche, the mountain slopes of mainland Southeast Asia; (b) their mode of adapting to that ecological niche, swidden ("shifting") cultivation; (c) certain aspects of their religious system, in particular a system of religious feasting; and (d) an apparent "oscillation" between two extreme forms of organization which can be characterized as "democratic" and "autocratic."¹²

It is my contention that the systematic variations manifested by these groups allows us to place them in a single analytical model, and that they stem primarily from various common features of the religious system. Some of these common features include religious conceptions regarding rewards for activities in this life which are meted out in an after-life, ideas concerning human "potency" and how it is acquired or manifested, and ritual activities which must be performed to gain "prestige" in this life as well as in a hereafter. These conceptions and activities have important implications because they serve to define the "nature" of man, ideas of "morally correct" relationships and activities, and even notions of what the "good" society consists of. That is, these religious conceptions define the "grounds of existence" for these upland peoples, and because these conceptions are similar and have analogous structural-functional consequences these groups may be treated as falling into a single class of societies.¹²

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10. It is intriguing to note that despite his interest in viewing the Kachin in terms of "political systems" Leach (1954: 51) uses a western "religious" metaphor to characterize the differences between *gumsa* and *gumlao*. He sees *gumsa* as a "Catholic" theory and *gumlao* as a "Protestant" theory of organization.
 11. This essay then does not deal with such numerous or significant upland Southeast Asian groups as the Karen, Miao, Yao, Garo, etc. Whether the model developed here can be applied to these groups or other alternative models are required is beyond the scope of the present essay.
 12. Bellah's (1964) scheme of "religious evolution" is an attempt to develop a typology based on views similar to those expressed in this essay. Peacock and Kirsch (1970) have attempted to apply Bellah's typology to a number of anthropological cases.

While I wish to emphasize the primary importance of cultural, particularly religious factors, I do not wish to ignore other factors which impinge on or condition these upland groups. For example, various features of their ecological niche and their common mode of adapting to that niche make the religious conceptions I stress understandable from a functionalist point of view. I am not arguing, however, that either the environmental conditions or the exigencies of a technological system can be seen as in any sense "causing" the religious beliefs or vice versa. Because the concepts and categories used by social scientists for the most part are analytical rather than concrete, such arguments about causation seem fruitless to me.¹³ One might view the physical environment as passive but imposing certain conditions or posing certain problems which must be "solved" if humans are to successfully occupy that environment. The pattern of hill tribes society and culture is simply one of many possible "solutions" to these problems set by the environment. But this solution is primarily a *cultural* one, because the problems posed by any physical environment are not absolutely fixed or given. They are largely defined by the culture which is adapting to or mastering it. The upland peoples of Southeast Asia have developed a sociocultural system which is optimally adapted to their ecological situation. They see this ecological niche as a place in which a *total* style of life--including religious, political and economic dimensions--has been worked out and can be maintained. Their lowland neighbors, Shan, Burmese, Thai and Lao, committed to a Buddhist life style and to sedentary rice agriculture, view the upland environment as worthless and its inhabitants as less than human. Westerners viewing this upland environment frequently see it in a more fragmented way. Though western science and technology could easily master the problems posed by the physical environment, the basically subsistence production of which it is capable is deemed uneconomical. But the westerner's commitment to a nation-state ideal may lead him to see these upland areas as important in terms of international strategic considerations. Viewed religiously the westerner has seen the area primarily as an arena suitable only for missionization. The upland peoples of Southeast Asia have adapted themselves to a narrow niche which is defined by their own cultural conceptions and resources as a total world. It is from the perspective of their own conceptions that they can best be understood.

I will now give a brief overview of my argument so that as it unfolds each piece may be seen in relation to the total structure. Later I will elaborate certain parts of the argument which can not be detailed here, e.g., the operation of the marriage system and the role of affinal relations. The model which I will use to develop this overview is basically that of maximizing a resource.¹⁴ This model is most familiar in its economic form. Hence, I will be using a kind of economic metaphor to lay out my argument.

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13. Levy (1952: 88-100) discusses the differences between analytic and concrete distinctions and variables. Rather than seek for "causes" I follow Parsons (1966), Bellah (1965, 1968), and Geertz (1965, 1966) in viewing the relationships between culture and society in terms of a "cybernetic" model. From this perspective values, symbols, and ideas (i.e., culture) are internalized by actors in the process of socialization and these serve to shape and control individual action and the structures of society. Since culture and society (and personality) interpenetrate each other they are related in terms of complex "feedback" networks rather than in a "causal" way.
 14. Burling (1962) and Cancian (1966) have discussed the use of maximization theories as applied to anthropological models. The following discussion may very well dismay both the substantivist economic anthropologists as represented by the views of Polanyi et al (1957) and Dalton (1960, 1961, 1963) and the formalists represented by Burling (1962), LeClaire (1962), and Cook (1966). In my view these two approaches do not represent mutually exclusive approaches.

OVERVIEW

Let me start by suggesting that hill tribes society is oriented to maximizing "potency," "fertility," or some such quality. This quality while attributed to persons is generally localized in household units. It may also be attributed to larger units such as lineages and clans. Each householder is conceived to be a "religious entrepreneur," trying to maximize his "potency" in relation to--but not necessarily at the expense of--other householders. In the functioning of this system which might be thought of as manufacturing "fertility," some units will inevitably be more successful than other units. This system is structured in such a way that those who are relatively successful are rewarded for their success by factors which tend to increase their competitive position in subsequent operations, though less successful units need not necessarily be prohibitively punished. Less successful units may try to link their operations with more successful units. Hence, somewhat larger units tend to develop with enhanced competitive positions vis-à-vis other still smaller units. These larger units (i.e., lineage segments, clans) might be likened to "family firms," and it becomes advantageous for the more successful units to form combinations (e.g., through affinal ties) serving to solidify their competitive advantage over less successful units. In forming these alliances each unit seeks to obtain the best terms possible for itself in relation to all other units in the system. At the same time, for some of the smaller less successful units it becomes advantageous to merge directly with one of the more successful units (i.e., be "adopted," or become a "slave"). This serves to make the units of the system larger and internally more complex, and simultaneously increases their potential for producing "fertility." As this "economy of fertility" develops, it becomes more and more "oligopolistic," i.e., rights to the control of the production of "fertility" are monopolized by a few very large units (i.e., clans), but it also becomes less stable because these few large units (in the persons of their leading members the "chiefs") are increasingly brought into direct competition with each other rather than with smaller units. A corollary of the increasing size and decreasing number of the units in the system is that alliances between units may become increasingly important, at the expense of individual achievements. This situation also presents motivational problems for the lower level members of these larger units (i.e., "dependents," "commoner" members of clans, "slaves"). The "proprietors" ("aristocrats," "chiefs") are not inclined to share the rewards of their enhanced ritual status. Some of these lower level members start "laying down on the job"; others may attempt to break out of this situation ("revolt") and start out as small time "entrepreneurs" in some area where the monopolists do not have a firm hold.

There is another important characteristic of the system which I am describing here. That is, no single unit can in fact monopolize the total "profit" of enhanced ritual status. This may of course occur in other systems. For example, the Shan theory of "divine kingship" might be seen as such a system in which one position monopolizes ritual status. But in this hypothetical model of hill tribes society total monopoly of ritual status cannot occur because such status is measured only in relation to other similar units, and the economy cannot be completely "closed." That is, there is no theoretical limit to the amount of "fertility" that can be produced, nor any theoretical limit to the "profit" in terms of "potency" since it is measured relatively rather than absolutely. Put in another way, the situation is one of a non-zero sum game in which relative positions are measured according to an ordinal scale.¹⁵ Any tendencies to close this economy of ritual status through an

15. For a discussion of ordinal scales see Selltiz et al (1963: 191-193). Many of the analytical models devised by anthropologists are zero-sum models, e.g., the "image of limited good" developed by Foster (1965). Political models, such as that used by Leach, which focus on power are frequently also zero-sum. That is, the amount of power in a system is taken to be fixed, hence, the amount of power held by a chief limits the amount of power available to others. If someone gains power it can only be at the expense of some others losing power. The religious model used here is not zero-sum. The amount of grace, merit or ritual efficacy in these upland systems is not fixed and the amount of this quality attributed to one person does not automatically limit the amount that may be attributed to others.

absolute monopoly would involve a complete transformation of the economy and a shift to a new set of rules, i.e., radical sociocultural change. That such a shift is theoretically possible cannot be denied, but what would be involved is a radical redefinition of *all* the norms and values governing the system. Bringing this model down to the ground for a moment, this would mean in the Kachin case literally "becoming Shan" or "social evolution." (Though a complicated situation one might say that the post-war efforts of the Naga and Kachin to gain a new political status involves just such an evolution.)

In true market economies a wide variety of kinds of goods are produced and sold. The functioning of the market is, partially at least if not completely, segregated from other social contexts. And, there is a clearcut distinction between producers and consumers. That is, the market economy is complex, differentiated and functionally specialized. Ideally, each unit in the market place is trying to maximize its position relative to all other similar units. The wealth which accrues in successful trading is used partially to finance further ventures and partially to symbolize the success of the unit so that there is a differentiation between rich and successful and poor and unsuccessful. In the situation of hill tribes society only a limited number of kinds of goods are produced, in particular those associated with agriculture (Other types of activity may also be equated with "potency" and "fertility," such as hunting success, daring in warfare or raiding, sexual prowess, etc.) The "market," however, is not segregated from other social contexts, nor is there a clearcut distinction between "producers" and "consumers." In the case of hill tribes society the "market" is closely articulated with the system of religious feasting (and affinal relations as well). As in true markets, each unit is trying to maximize its position relative to all other units in the system; however, the wealth which accrues is not "money" but an enhanced ritual status, increased control of ritual rights, and an increment of imputed "innate virtue." The operation of the hill tribes "market," i.e., the feasting system, tends to equalize actual standards of living, but to increase relative differences in ritual status.

A major threat to hill tribes society as well as to market economies is "monopoly." Among the hill tribes, monopoly consists of "exclusive ritual rights," whereas in the market economy, monopoly consists of exclusive control of means of production and/or distribution. Monopoly in both situations serves to eliminate competition and to close off the economy. But, the life blood of the market and of hill tribes society is competition. In those societies in which the market is segregated from other components of social life, monopoly in one sphere of the economy does not immediately create any acute strain for the economy as a whole or for the larger society. Such economies produce many kinds of goods so that competition can be channeled into other areas, both within and outside the economy. By contrast the economy of the upland Southeast Asian groups is undifferentiated and not segregated from the other contexts of the larger society. And, hill tribes society produces only one major type of good, i.e., "fertility." If the "economy" of these upland groups were closed and competition cut off, the entire system would collapse. But, in these upland groups this point is rarely, if ever, reached because there are a variety of mechanisms which serve to reduce the strains involved. For example, there is not a single overarching economy but rather numerous localized economies which are not completely integrated. Adoption, slavery, and migration also serve to minimize or at least reduce some of the strains involved. In an abstract way we might view the various upland groups as distributed along a continuum of development ranging between the extremes of "perfect competition" (*gumlao*) and "absolute monopolistic control" (*gumsa*) (see Figure 2 below).

Having presented this overview using an economic metaphor I will now spell out some of the features of the ecological situation in which these groups are found which seem to be significant in structuring social forms and activities. In particular, I wish to note and to underline an important link between the ecological situation and various features of the religious system, most notably the feasting system. It is this link which forms the basis for my assumption regarding the motivations which lead to certain of the systematic variations we find in hill tribes society. I will then go on to outline some general characteristics of hill tribes religion. Finally, I will discuss some of the features of hill tribes society which seem to be related to these ecological and religious factors.

THE SITUATION OF HILL TRIBES SOCIETY

The various hill tribes of mainland Southeast Asia are distinguished from their lowland neighbors by three criteria: (a) they reside at varying elevations ranging from 1500 to 6000 feet above sea level on the slopes of the mountain ranges; (b) they follow a regime of swidden agriculture; and (c) in contrast to the bulk of the valley dwellers, they do not follow any great historic religion such as the Theravada Buddhism practiced by the Burmese, Shan, Thai and Lao. That is, they are "animists."

The region in which the hill tribes live is notable for having very high rates of annual rainfall. But, this rainfall is not distributed evenly throughout the year. It is influenced by monsoon winds. Another factor influencing rainfall is the configuration of the mountain ranges themselves, which result in very irregular wind patterns. Thus, these groups are not only dependent on an *area-wide* distribution of rainfall which may be erratic due to monsoon winds but the irregular wind currents resulting from the topography also make the rainfall supply for any *particular* locale problematic (Stevenson, 1943: 33).ⁱ It is interesting to observe that among these groups we not only find ritual practices aimed at producing rain, but also for stopping an overabundant rainfall (Hutton, 1921a: 136; Mills, 1926: 130).ⁱ

Aside from localized problems of rainfall distribution, there are also significant differences in soil fertility both within and between various localities within the upland ecological niche. These differences in fertility are correlated in part with differences in slope, underbrush, soil content and fallowing periods, etc. That the upland peoples are acutely aware of these problems is indicated by the extensive body of agricultural lore which they have amassed through years of experience. Among other things, the technology of swidden agriculture encourages numbers of people to cultivate together in swidden blocks rather than on separated individual clearings. The requirements for fallowing place some empirical limits on the total number of people who can live and work together. Within the limits of the smallest possible group capable of cultivating effectively as a unit and the largest group which can be supported by a swidden technology, there is a fairly wide range.¹⁶ This range is influenced not only by considerations of technical efficiency, but by other social and cultural factors as well.

Viewed analytically the factors of technology and ecology indicate that there are certain fundamental problems which hill tribes culture and society must meet and solve. Given the uncertainties with respect to rainfall and land fertility, adequate agricultural production could potentially become problematical. In particular, the motivation to maximize production cannot be left to chance. Nor, under the circumstances, can the desire to produce simply be left to the individual's desire to "fill his own belly" as Mills (1937: 172) puts it. Every unit of production (typically a household) must be *highly* motivated to produce; there can be no room for shirkers. Hence, we find that even "chiefs" are actively involved in agricultural production even though there is some evidence that there may *actually* be a considerable surplus production which could potentially support some "non-productive" specialists. This evidence includes the extensive presence of non-consumable "heirloom" wealth in the form of gongs, jars, swords, necklaces, etc., and among the Ao Naga even a supply of rice "black with age" used exclusively for prestige loans (Mills, 1926: 106). Apparently then at least some of these upland groups are fully capable of producing a surplus over and above subsistence needs but fail to emulate their lowland neighbors by using this surplus to support non-productive religious (e.g., monks), or political (e.g., kings) specialists.¹⁷

16. Fisher (1964: 71) estimates that a family unit of five following a swidden regime would require access to some 25 acres of land to sustain itself. He reckons that swidden agriculture can support a population density of approximately 130 people per square mile. Though Geertzi (1963) deals with a quite different geographic situation in Indonesia, he does highlight a number of significant social implications of swidden agriculture vs. sedentary rice cultivation.

17. There is a lively debate amongst economic anthropologists about the notion of surplus and its applicability to relatively simple societies, e.g., Pierson (1957), Harris (1959), Dalton (1960, 1961, 1963), and Orans (1966).ⁱ I use the

To insure that the exigencies of climate, ecology and technology are overcome there must be some mechanism which will motivate persons to strive as hard as they can to produce. Aside from this, there must also be some sort of mechanism which will distribute any surplus production equitably throughout the group so that persons who are unable to maximize production because of chance or random factors are not totally and disastrously penalized. I will argue that the prime factor in inducing this motivation is to be found in the religious system and that the distributive apparatus is to be found particularly in the feasting complex referred to in the ethnographic literature as "feasts of merit."¹⁸ If this is the case we might well expect that questions of "fertility," "potency," "efficacy," and the like will loom large in the symbolism of these groups and be reflected in their social structures. We might also note that if *everyone* in these groups is strongly committed to maximize what is essentially the same good or quality we might well expect that problems of societal stability might be encountered. Since the value of maximizing "fertility" is both a *social* value, structuring social forms, and a *personal* value, structuring individual action, the integration of these two perspectives on the same value orientation may produce "conflicts of interest" which may be difficult to resolve. Let me turn now to various aspects of hill tribes religion.

term surplus here in an analytical sense to refer to any goods produced beyond the subsistence needs of a population which might theoretically be allocated in a variety of ways other than those in which it is actually allocated. The situation amongst the Southeast Asian hill tribes appears to be similar to that reported by Carneiro (1961) among the Kuikuru of the Amazon Basin. One possible conclusion of these observations is that a surplus production (in the sense mentioned above) may be a necessary but is not a sufficient condition for increasing sociocultural complexity. Such a conclusion would be consistent with the cybernetic view of the relationships between culture and society mentioned above in Note 13.

18. The conclusions of Piddocke (1965) regarding the traditional Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch system seem similar to what is proposed here.

HILL TRIBES RELIGION

Earlier I criticized Leach for having failed to emphasize the religious element in Kachin society. I maintain that hill tribes society is relatively undifferentiated, that political, economic, kinship and other structures and functions are "embedded" in a diffuse religious complex. That is, in such relatively undifferentiated societies as those of the hill tribes religious concerns color all aspects of life. This view derives from my theoretical preconceptions. Does it fit with the ethnographic accounts? I find considerable evidence which seems to support my view. Regarding the Lamet, for example, Izikowitz (1951: 15) observes that, "the cult of the ancestors is the alpha and omega of their lives." Again, quoting Izikowitz (1951a: 332), "the feast of the ancestors and all connected with it is the driving force in the entire economic and social life of the Lamet." With respect to the Central Chin Stevenson (1943: 22) suggests that, "It is true to say that every traditional economic choice open to the Chin has in it some element of religious bias." Stevenson (1943: 137) goes on to remark that the Chin system of religion feasting is "the cornerstone of the Chin economic structure. The largest proportion of the Chin surplus resources are utilized through this channel and in them the Chin finds the major portion of his psychological and spiritual satisfactions." Stevenson's interest in the Chin is "economic," but Leach's interest in the Kachin is "political" and he notes that the basis of *gumba* ("autocratic") political power is a chief's ritual rights to sacrifice to the spirits controlling fertility of the domain (Leach, 1954: 129, 176-177). Now Leach's analysis shows that the "political" tensions marked in his village were manifested by the erection of separate "sacred groves" (*numshang*) for each of the contending village factions (1954: 95-7, 122). I would suggest that this was not merely a case of political "secession" as Leach sees it but one of religious "schism" as well. From this point of view, we might then characterize the Kachin *gumlaø* "rebellion" as a flight for greater "religious freedom," a repudiation of exclusive ritual control by a chief.

When we come to the various monographs on the Naga by Hutton and Mills, my contention that religious considerations are of paramount importance in hill tribes society seems to encounter some difficulty. With regard to the Angami Naga, Hutton remarks that, "In common with other savage races the Angami regards the supernatural in general from a point of view that is sublimely vague" (1921a: 177). He goes on to note that "the average Angami troubles his head very little as to what is in store for him after death. He looks on death as the abhorrent end of everything that interests him, and neither pretends to know nor cares what comes after" (1921a: 185). Similar comments may also be found in Mills' monographs. These statements seem to be predicated on a somewhat naive view of religion and its functioning. There are other statements within these same monographs which actually contradict such a view of the relationship between Naga religion and society. Later I will argue that such a "misinterpretation" is understandable given certain features of the hill tribes worldview, particularly with regard to the structure of time, and the distinction (or absence of a distinction) between "secular" action and "sacred" action. Now I will outline the evidence that seems to indicate contradictions in Hutton's and Mills' descriptions of Naga religion.

First of all, let me note that all of the hill tribes are reported to have some belief concerning the existence of an "after-life" (typically involving the "Land of the Dead" or the "Village of the Dead") although there seem to be considerable variations in belief with regard to its "location," etc. (cf. Hutton, 1921a: 185; Mills, 1937: 169). The Angami may serve as one example: "There is a vague idea in Angami eschatology of a distinction between the sheep and the goats, for whereas the former go to a heaven, located somewhere in the sky . . . the latter go down beneath the earth" (Hutton, 1921a: 183-4). "The ideas as to the sort of existence experienced in heaven by the soul which qualifies for ('heaven') are . . . vague. . . a notion, however, is expressed by some that life (in 'heaven') will be a sort of improved edition of life on this earth with the more unpleasant incidents expunged. . . . The principal qualification for ('heaven') is that one should have performed the *Zhato genna* (the last in the series of 'feasts of merit') and should have thereafter eaten no unclean meat" (Hutton, 1921a: 184-5). It seems clear then that the motivation to perform feasts cannot be considered purely "secular." These observations also indicate that there is some sort of "heavenly reward" for earthly meritorious action, and that the mode of this meritorious action is well defined; i.e., the performance of feasts.

The problem then becomes, to what extent are persons *actually motivated* to perform such acts? Returning to Hutton, we find that he classes the "feast of merit" primarily as "secular" because these feasts "confer social status" (1921a: 230). He says, "It does not seem to be obligatory upon anyone to perform these gennas (i.e., feasts), but in point of fact, they are usually performed by anyone who can afford them" (1921a: 230). Similar connections between "heavenly reward" and performing "feasts of merit" are reported for all of the Naga and the high motivation to perform the feasts is even more dramatically spelled out. For example, with regard to the Rengma, "every man tries to proceed as far in (the feast series) as his means permit, for on the feasts he has given his social status depends; it would be an *unheard of thing* for a man not to go further with the series if he could afford to do so" (Mills, 1937: 181, italics added). Again, "the wealth and consequently the importance of a man is gauged by the number of ('feasts of merit') he has done, for the Lhota like all Nagas . . . is a great respecter of wealth. It is therefore the ambition of every man to perform the full series (of feasts) if he possibly can" (Mills, 1922: 136).

Mills characterizes the Lhota as one who "rarely turns his thoughts to what is in store for him when he dies" (1922: 121). Yet "the dead live (in 'heaven') exactly as men live here, those who have done good deeds here (i.e., performed feasts) being rich and happy, and those who have done evil deeds (i.e., not performed feasts) being poor and miserable" (1922: 119). With regard to "heaven," we typically find that "those who were rich here (i.e., have given a large number of feasts) are rich there, and those who were poor here (i.e., gave few feasts) are poor there" (cf. Mills, 1926: 231; Hutton, 1921b: 212). Thus, the Naga seem to equate "earthly" status and "heavenly" status rather directly. That is, they are direct reflections of each other.

The conclusion which I would draw from these observations is *not* that the Naga (and the other hill tribes) are "unworried" about their position in the next life, but rather that virtually every act which they perform is directed to *simultaneously* improving their status in this-world and the next-world. That is, they make no radical distinction between what we might call "purely secular" acts and statuses and "purely sacred" acts and statuses.¹⁹ This distinction, however, is introduced by Hutton and by Mills in emphasizing the *social* (i.e., secular) status functions of the feasts of merit.

Stevenson seems to have noted the importance of this failure to distinguish between "secular" and "sacred" with regard to the Chin. Thus: "Most important in its effect on temporal life is the belief that a *ghost retains in death the rank attained in life*. All ghosts pass through (the 'lower heaven') and there is a special system of examination whereby their earthly status is established and their place in (the 'highest heaven') or the ('lower heaven') determined. It stands to reason that this belief is a powerful stimulus to temporal effort to advance in rank, *and since this advance can be made in these days through the peaceful Feasts, which in turn demand diligent agricultural effort to produce the wherewithal of feasting, the diffusion of this stimulus through the whole economic life of the people can be clearly demonstrated*: (1943: 22, italics in the original). It is questionable, then, whether the hill tribes themselves distinguish between "secular" acts and "sacred" acts. This is not to say that there are no such things as "technical acts" in hill tribes life, since clearly their efficiency in hunting and in agriculture indicates that there is an effective body of technical lore. This absence of a radical distinction between secular and sacred suggests, and the ethnography bears out, that technical acts are embedded in a matrix of religious ritual, i.e., for the hill tribes technical acts and ritual acts are necessary aspects of the *same* action (cf. Leach, 1954: 10-14). We will return to this failure to distinguish between "secular" action and "sacred" action below to spell out some of its implications for other aspects of hill tribes life, e.g., orientations to time, myth, and symbolism. Let us first consider some of the religious conceptions of the hill tribes.

The Structure of the Hill Tribes Supernatural World

Leach has characterized the Kachin spirits (*nats*) as "magnificent non-natural men" and he suggests that "they simply extend the human class hierarchy to a higher level and are continuous with it" (1954a: 173). I believe that this observation can be generalized to the attributes of the spirits of all the hill tribes.

19. This situation appears similar to that which Bellah (1964) discusses with respect to "primitive" religious symbol systems. See also Stanner's (1956) discussion of "The Dreaming" of Australian aborigines as an "everywhen.d"

Although the data is somewhat uneven, let me list some of the kinds of spirits which the ethnographers report consistently from the various hill tribes. There are "sky spirits" and "earth spirits" of varying degrees of specification and importance serving to top the spiritual hierarchy. Although the "sky spirits" are paramount in most of the hill tribes groups, apparently the "sky spirit" of the Kachin is subordinate to the "earth spirit." These spirits control general health, prosperity, and fertility but their relative importance and the general sphere of control (i.e., region of influence) are variable. Below these two classes of spirits are a "creator" spirit or a "chief" spirit, seen as the "creation principle," the "ruler of the Land of the Dead" and/or the ancestor of man. There are also "locality" spirits controlling both household sites and agricultural plots, as well as "ancestral spirits" associated with various lineage segments extending from the household to the "clan." We also find a "spirit of fruitfulness" which gives good crops, and a "chief of animals" which gives hunting success, and often a "bad spirit" or "evil one" who gives poor crops as well. Associated with the ideas concerning heaven, there is a spirit which "guards the road to the land of the dead," which "examines" the spirit concerning its earthly status, or tries to "catch souls." Besides these spirits, there are also spirits which cause "illness, jealousy, family strife, miscarriages, Hallucinations, sudden death," etc.

Despite the cultural diversity of the hill tribes belief systems, it is significant that they have chosen to personify forces in the external world that can be linked closely to the problem of "fertility," the problem which I have posited as being central for the hill tribes. Leach feels that he has "reduced the (Kachin) gods and witches to mere manifestations of the human emotions" and that "the various *nats* of Kachin religious ideology are, in the last analysis, *nothing more* than ways of describing the formal relationships that exist between real persons and real groups in ordinary human Kachin society" (1954: 182, italics added). Such a conclusion seems presumptuous since we cannot demonstrate that this is the case or whether human relations are "modeled after" beliefs about relationships between the spirits. Leach's conclusion does reinforce the view that he is very likely to underplay the influence of "religious" factors and to emphasize the role of such "real" factors as political "power," or control of economic "goods." Polemic aside, let us turn to some of the religious conceptions to be found concerning individuals and the supernatural forces which are intimately associated with them.

Supernatural Concepts Associated with Individuals

If it is true that the problems of "fertility" and of "potency" are as important as I have hypothesized, we should expect to find some ethnographic verification of this, and indeed we do. Let me indicate briefly the content of some of these ideas drawn from the literature.

Ao Naga: *Aren* "That curious quality of innate prosperity in which the Ao believes so strongly. This virtue, by building their fieldhouses first, they (i.e., 'rich men') will impart to the whole block of cultivation" (Mills, 1926: 111).

As a part of the first "feast of merit": "The sacrificer offers a pig, a fowl, and an egg in front of his granary, praying that *aren* may come to him and make good the heavy expense of the sacrifice" (Mills, 1926: 387).

In a footnote Hutton adds: "The word *aren* is more or less identical with the Polynesian word *mana*" (Mills, 1926: 257).

Lamet: *Hrkiak* "is translated as strength, courage, badness . . . the Lamet consider rich men to be mean. This word means everything that can be summed up in psychic strength, courage, and badness. To a certain degree, it can be compared with the quality of hardness which a man with *mana* possesses. However, there is no ceremony for in any way transferring this, at least not as far as I know, nor for increasing it, otherwise than prayer. *Hrkiak* only indicates this quality and therefore does not cover the word *mana* completely. The difference might be expressed by saying that a man can have *mana* but one can be *hrkiak*" (Izikowitz, 1951: 221).

Muit "The Lamet believe that there are such men with an inner power called *muit*, which they use in persuading plants to grow better" (Izikowitz, 1951: 270).

Kachin: *Hpaji* "Where a commoner lineage has remote claims to aristocracy an ambitious individual can work his way up the social scale by repeatedly validating these claims. Such a man in Kachin terminology possesses *hpaji*. *Hpaji* is the counterpart of *sut* ('riches'); it is manifested by lavishness in hospitality and feast-giving. It can be translated as 'wisdom' or 'cunning.' Only the rich can afford to give feasts, only the wise and cunning know how to get rich. Wisdom in itself does not necessarily imply aristocracy but when it comes to social climbing, the cunning ones are at an advantage" (Leach, 1954: 163-4).

Tsam In a brief footnote, Leach comments: *tsam* "is a concept resembling the classical anthropologist's *mana*" (1954: 262). This quality is associated most particularly with "chiefs" and Leach translates it as "innate spiritual virtue."

These conceptions concerning the inner qualities of individuals may serve to distinguish "classes" or "kinds" of men, i.e., those with "more," or "less," of these qualities, and those with "little" or "none" of these qualities. Let us note further that while one may be born with such a quality, the quality is never static, i.e., it may be "increased" or "decreased" (or "lost") since it is manifested or validated by successful acts in the empirical world (notably feasts) and is evaluated by reference to the actions of others. Of course, the situation is actually somewhat more complex than this. Let us look at some other religious ideas that are associated with individuals. Because of the ethnographic complexity, I will treat the Ao Naga concept of *tiya* as typical of a range of ideas found in the hill tribes. Let me note, however, that the ethnographers explicitly equate the Ao concept of *tiya* with the Angami concept of *ropfu* (Hutton, 1921a: 98, 182) and the Sema concept of *aghau* (Hutton, 1921b: 193). The Rengma (Mills, 1937: 164, 168-9) and the Lhota (Mills, 1922: 115) have similar concepts and the Kachin (Leach, 1963: 14) also appear to have a similar notion. All of these ideas carry with them the notion of one's "personal familiar," "double," a personal "Fate" or "Destiny," or in some cases the ethnographers cannot distinguish it from the individual's "soul" (e.g., Hutton 1921a: 183; 1921b: 193). For the Ao, the individual gets his *tiya* in the following way. "The *tiya* seem to be in some sort of way pre-existent in the sky, becoming incarnate in an infant at birth . . . (the various) *tiya* spread leaves around the place where the child is being born--usually near the hearth in his father's house--and the *tiya* whose leaf the child touches first become attached to the child. . . . *Tiya* vary in character. There are rich *tiya* and poor *tiya*, healthy *tiya* and sick *tiya*. The infant's destiny thus depends on the nature of the *tiya* he gets" (Mills, 1926: 223). (Compare Leach and the Kachin acquiring his "soul" (*minla*), Leach, 1963: 14.)

Besides such supernatural forces as the *tiya*, there are other spiritual influences at work as exemplified by the Ao *kitsung*, which also has its parallels in the other hill tribes.

Among the minor spirits the most important is the house-spirit *kitsung* . . . (distinguished from the spirit of the house site which is tied to that particular spot) . . . the *kitsung* is a being attached to a man, which will always occupy his house, even if he moves to another village . . . at least every three years, or oftener if necessary, a sacrifice is offered to the *kitsung*. . . . A *kitsung* can bring both good and evil fortune. An incorrigible *kitsung* whom no sacrifice will appease is (ritually) sold and got rid of. . . . If a man does not succeed in getting rid of the troublesome *kitsung* in this way (i.e., "selling" it ritually) he must simply put up with it. (Mills, 1926a: 233f.) (Compare Leach's discussion of Kachin *maraw* "luck," 1954: 177f.)

Thus, we see that the hill tribesman sees two kinds of supernatural influences on everyday life: *inner qualities* such as *aren*, *hrkiak*, and *muit*, *hpaji*, and *tsam* (which we might equate, in part, with "motivation"), and *external forces* personified by such concepts as *tiya*, *ropfu*, *aghau*, and *maraw* (which we might equate with "luck"). Possession of such qualities and/or the favorable attention of these external forces are evidenced by raising one's "social status" through giving feasts. As Hutton and Mills describe it, we might imagine that a person is given increased "prestige" as a "reward" for having given feasts, and analytically this may be quite appropriate. However, to equate the quality which the hill tribes attribute to successful feast givers with "social status" or "prestige" disassociates it too completely from the "religious" context in which it occurs. As the ethnography actually suggests, this quality is very much like *mana*, which can hardly be identified completely with "prestige." Furthermore, although we might characterize the increased "respect" given to

the feast-giver as a "reward," given the religious conceptions which the ethnographers report, I would suggest that the successful feaster is actually *demonstrating* his "innate virtue," showing his "internal potency," and his control over external supernatural forces. One way of characterizing the hill tribes beliefs with regard to individuals is to say that they have a theory of "unequal souls." Again, as we might expect, the empirical situation is more complex than described above, for there are several contexts in which one's "potency" is manifested. Let us turn to one ritual context in which some of these areas are graphically symbolized; namely, death and funerals.

Death and Funeral Rites

As we might expect from a society in which "potency" is emphasized, and from Hutton's and Mills' comments cited above with regard to the hill tribes, death is not viewed as a particularly happy state. Of special interest are the grave decorations since these may be taken as clues regarding those areas of life which the hill tribes see as most important. We find that death and burial provide an occasion for ostentatious feasting during which the deceased's "social status" is re-affirmed as well as that of his heirs. Among some of the Naga, the Lamet, and the Kachin (for "chiefs") stone memorials may be erected. At the grave, or nearby, the past achievements of the deceased in various undertakings are symbolized, notably: (a) in the "feast of merit" series, (b) hunting prowess, (c) "head-hunting," (d) success in sexual intrigues, and (e) the number of "slaves" owned. Each of these may be taken as symbolizing the "potency" of the individual both in terms of his "inner qualities" and his control of external forces. Thus, the Ao belief that "elderly bachelors and spinsters who die unwedded" find difficulty going to the "Land of the Dead" becomes clear (Mills, 1926: 228). Their failure, however, is not just failure to perform feasts--the prerogative of married couples--but their failure to marry at all is an indication of their lack of "potency," since as we shall see below, marriage and affinal relations are also linked to this religious complex.

We might consider another element related to the meaning of death in hill tribes society. The hill tribes (along with many other peoples of Southeast Asia) regard certain kinds of death as particularly abhorrent. These include: (a) death in childbirth, (b) suicide, (c) drowning, (d) death due to wild animals, and (e) death by violent accident. These kinds of death are seen as "manifestations of supernatural displeasure" (Mills, 1922: 160). Among at least some of the hill tribes (e.g., Lhota, Kachin, Ao) the personal effects, house, crops, animals and even cash of a person dying in such a way were either destroyed or abandoned "bring ruin on all of his household" (Mills, 1926: 283). Thus, while "potency" is particularly honored, sudden loss of "potency" is extremely threatening--which seems to reinforce the view that this is a central concern of the hill tribes. This sudden loss of "potency" also supports our contention that one's "innate virtue" is not seen as a constant. While such unfortunate deaths are the most dramatic indication of the loss of this quality, the structure of the "feast of merit" series is such that we might regard it a mechanism for "manufacturing" or "increasing" one's "potency" or possibly we might conceive of feasting as a "test" of one's "virtue." It is significant to note that as one proceeds through the series the "worth" of the successful feaster increases (cf. Stevenson, 1943: 159).

Ancestral Spirits

Another problem on which we must touch briefly is the status of "ancestral" spirits and an "ancestral" cult since several ethnographers mention that these are found in the hill tribes. This problem may be linked to the cycle of "development" from a "democratic" order to an "autocratic" order, i.e., "ancestral" cults become increasingly important as a "clanship" ideology develops, since lineage depth and the relative importance of kinship ties are a function of this developmental cycle. A few comments may be relevant here. Leach has noted that the Kachin *gumba* "chief" has certain exclusive ritual rights because some ancestor in his patrilineal (and "youngest son") line had affinal relations with the spirits which control the fertility of the domain (*mung*). Leach notes further that there are variant versions of genealogical relations with these spirits (i.e., there is "competition" over these ritual rights) and that none of these versions can be taken as any more "true" than any other. That is, the effectiveness of the chief's sacrifice is "proof" of the relationship. If a chief's sacrifices are not effective, i.e., if the *mung* is not particularly "fertile" (or more threatening yet, if the chief cannot afford to

sacrifice at all), this does not mean that his genealogy is "false." What is more likely to occur is that some person whose sacrifices are more effective and who puts forward a variant genealogy may "usurp" the chief's position. This does not necessarily imply any violent "deposition" or "war" (though this may occur) but it does involve "converting" the chief's followers into his own, i.e., they "accept" the genealogy of a new chief. The situation in Leach's Kachin village seems to have been following this course, and there is some evidence that similar processes were at work among the Rengma (Mills, 1937: 138).²⁰

This does not mean that "ancestral spirits" are of no importance. However, I would suggest that the prominence given to "ancestral spirits" in the ethnography is less a reflection of *actual* genealogical tradition within these societies than a function of the "poverty of expression" of the hill tribes ritual language (and perhaps a preoccupation of some anthropologists with kinship factors at the expense of others). That actual ancestral spirits are of less importance than effective spirits to which one can claim genealogical relationship seems to be borne out by the fluidity of *actual* kinship organization, "adoption," "quasi-assimilation" into other lineages, and high rates of *individual* migration. These factors will be discussed in more detail below; however, let me note here that Izikowitz has also raised the question of the meaning of the "ancestral spirits" among the Lamet, where lineage fragmentation seems to be very rapid (Izikowitz, 1951: 332)^a

Time and Myth

This observation regarding the fluidity of hill tribes social life leads us back to a point made earlier with regard to the absence of a radical distinction between purely "secular" acts and statuses and purely "sacred" acts and statuses. The distinction which Westerners make between the "here" and the "here-after" does not seem to be so rigid in hill tribes religion. What appears to follow from this is a focusing of time-orientation on the "present" (with a variable but narrow scale of time on "either side" of the present; cf. Stanner, 1956)^a The exigencies of the ecological situation and the technological system make this understandable. Crop successes (i.e., "fertility") of the past cannot be relied on in the present, nor can expectations of bumper crops in the future. Of course this is not peculiarly a problem of the hill tribes since it is largely a function of an agricultural style of life. However, the uncertainties of the ecological situation which were sketched out above may heighten this problem for the hill tribes, requiring that everyone must be continuously motivated--neither resting on the laurels of past success or "under-achieving" in the anticipation of future bounty. In terms of the religious system this involves maximizing one's feasting status, raising one's "secular-sacred" status by manifesting one's "innate virtue" or "potency."^d

We might cite a number of observations which seem to indicate this narrowly circumscribed orientation to time. One striking belief reported from a number of the Naga tribes is that life in the "land of the dead" is not ever-lasting. After some unspecified period of time, the dead "die," "fade-away," or "vanish." This belief is paralleled by actual ending of "respect" for (specific) dead. Thus we find a ritual ending of mourning for the dead with the grave goods thrown away (Mills, 1926: 130)^a Among the Lhota (noted for their "megalithic" cult) burial is in the street before one's house but the "grave" quickly reverts to street after burial (Mills, 1926: 157). In several of the Naga groups there are special cemeteries set aside for burials. The cemetery area remains "constant," i.e., old graves which fall apart are replaced by new graves. In many of the hill tribes groups, burials are performed in the jungle and the graves are quickly swallowed up by jungle once more. These factors suggest that orientations to the "past" are not particularly important. (See Leach, 1954: 149, 164, where he shows that fulfillment of *current* ritual obligations take primacy over ascribed status.)

What about any "future" orientation? This question is considerably more difficult because the ethnographers themselves were frequently attuned to problems of "past" orientations amongst the hill tribes, e.g., "true" genealogies, tribal migrations, etc. (possibly to the point where they considerably over-estimated the importance of such "past" orientations)^a There is little evidence of any millennial ideas

20. There is a graphic description of just such a "usurpation" and loss of power among the Konyak Naga in Furer-Haimendorf (1939: 47-50).

occurring in the literature.²¹ Aside from this, the ethnographers have frequently emphasized that "death is the end of everything of interest" to the hill tribesman. Thus, while "other-worldly" motives are prominent in structuring religious action and therefore society, ideas of "eternal reward" or of a future ideal restructuring of society play no great role. This factor makes it easy to understand why Hutton and Mills have emphasized the "secular" nature of hill tribes society at the expense of the "sacred" elements. Such an emphasis distorts the picture, however, because it overlooks the direct parallelism between the structure of "this-world" and the "next-world"; and it underplays the role of specifically religious motivations and conceptions.

The absence of a distinction between "secular" and "sacred" illuminates other features recorded in the ethnography. Leach has observed that the Kachin use non-permanent materials to mark any rise in status, e.g., bamboo altars, wooden posts, house decorations, etc. (although symbols marking a "chief's" status may be more permanent). Beyond this, the ritual objects used in sacrifices are ritually destroyed within a year after the feast is held. Thus, to some extent, each feast requires a fresh beginning. Leach contrasts this situation with that of the Naga, where stone is sometimes used to memorialize feasting achievement. He suggests that "stone is altogether too permanent a substance to be used for the expression of status symbols in a society as flexible as that of the Kachin" (1954: 121). Even among those Naga who use stone to symbolize feasting achievement, the prestige symbolized is not "permanent." The Lhota are among the most assiduous in following this "megalithic" complex, but Lhota villages are reported to be cluttered with *fallen* stones symbolizing some past glory (Mills, 1922: 23). Occasionally one may find that a stone has been erected to memorialize a deceased parent. This seems to be rather rare, apparently the result of either *unusually* good or unusually bad luck, e.g., a bumper crop, repeated deaths of one's children, etc. Although some natural stones seem to be regarded as the repositories of special virtue, frequently associated with some mythical event or person, they do not appear to be associated with any current person or social group. The stones erected to symbolize status advance among the Naga do not serve as a focus for any "ancestral" (or other) cult. The "megalithic" Naga are too concerned with erecting their *own* stones, to enhancing their own status, to be bothered with honoring any past achievement. Although we might think of these stones as pathetic attempts to make permanent prestige and status relations, hill tribes society in general is too flexible and its time orientation too narrow to structure itself around any permanent symbols that irrevocably fix status relations.

The Functioning of Myth

Leach has characterized the language of Kachin ritual and of myth as one used to express social antagonisms rather than social harmony and this seems to hold well for all of the hill tribes (1954: 264ff.; 85). This observation spells out nicely the emphasis in hill tribes society on competition and achievement of ritual status. Where differences in ritual status are great, e.g., in "autocratic" groups, there *may* be little disagreement about the mythology, i.e., variant versions are in close agreement. But in situations where differences in ritual status ("potency") become extremely narrow, the variant versions may diverge and intensify cleavages. It is interesting to note that, in those hill tribes where there is evidence of such narrow differences in ritual status leading to intense conflict, we also find specialized roles developed to detail the mythology, e.g., "saga-tellers" (*jaiwa*) among the Kachin. In the Khmer Empire (and other more complex societies of Southeast Asia) we find that *society* is "manipulated" so that its structure accords with that of the mythology (cf. Heine-Geldern, 1956). Among the hill tribes, *myth* is constantly being reconstituted in order to conform to the actual contemporary structure of the society (see Leach, 1954: 164). Of course, this process is made easy by the worldview of hill tribes religion and the orientation to time which is associated with it.

To finish this brief survey of hill tribes religion, let me now turn to two key ritual contexts: feasts and affinal relations.

21. Whatever millennial elements are to be found among the upland peoples seem to result from contacts with neighboring lowlanders and/or colonial experiences. See Hutton (1921a: 13), Stevenson (1943: 168ff.), and Stern (1968).

Ritual Feasting²²

We find a series of feasts, graded in terms of increasing difficulty of performance ("feasts of merit") in all of the Naga tribes, the Chin, and the Kachin. Although it is not clear from the ethnography whether Lamet feasts are graded in any hierarchical system, they are included here because the results of the feasts seem to parallel the results of the "feasts of merit." The sponsor of these feasts is invariably a household unit, although larger units, i.e., lineage segments, or others, e.g., "bond friends," or affines, may play some role. Since only married couples have access to feasting rights we might expect that this is an important factor in motivating persons to marry and may play an important role in lineage formation and segmentation.²³ Both husband and wife (the "sponsors") are simultaneously raised in ritual status by giving feasts. Some increment of this "prestige" may also be shared by other members of their household or lineage as well. Stevenson brings out in fine detail the articulation between motivation to perform feasts and motivation to produce (1943: *passim*; see also Izikowitz, 1951: 332, 341). Let me merely note that his comments may be generalized to all of the hill tribes considered here. After having accumulated enough goods to sponsor such a feast, the household provides food, primarily in the form of sacrificial animals (mithan, buffalo, cattle and/or pigs) and grain (mainly in the form of liquor), for its own village, or possibly for another village or village segment. It has frequently been noted that these feasts tend to even out any inequalities in diet, in agricultural skill, plot fertility, or "luck." Thus, the standards of living for the "rich" (i.e., successful) and the "poor" (less successful) are very similar. Ethnographers have often failed to note the fact that, while economic inequalities are being evened out, these feasts serve to *increase status differences* within these societies. The sponsors of feasts are given symbolic recognition in terms of rights to wear special decorations, ornaments to houses, and empirical rewards in terms of larger shares of the feasts sponsored by others, better shares of land to cultivate, and an increased voice in village affairs. I have already noted that the increased "prestige" accorded the successful feast giver has an important element of the "religious" in it. From the standpoint which I am developing here, this "prestige" is not given as a "reward." Rather, giving feasts "proves" that the sponsor has certain *innate qualities* of "potency" which qualify him for this "prestige."

Affinal Relations as Religious Ritual

Anthropological theorists have recently focused their attention on the hill tribes of mainland Southeast Asia because a large number of these groups seem to have an unusual type of system of marriage alliance known as matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. My concern here is not with the lively debate about this subject.²⁴ I do hope to show how some of the factors operating in hill tribes religion contribute to the functioning of such marriage systems. Possibly it is unconventional to treat affinal relations as a matter of religious ritual, and indeed I must anticipate a part of the argument which will be developed below with regard to hill tribes social structure. Table 1 (see Appendix) shows that there is excellent ethnographic evidence that the hill tribes considered here do have, at least, systems of preferential matrilineal cross-cousin marriage--and, if the data were somewhat better, we might find that some of these groups approximate closed systems of prescriptive matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. In dealing with the hill tribes marriage systems, I follow Leach (1951, 1954) very closely. In societies having such a prescriptive marriage rule, any Ego is required to marry a woman who falls in the class of women including Mother's Brother's Daughter. He is forbidden to marry women who fall in the class of women including Father's Sister's Daughter. Societies of this

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22. The following discussion of ritual feasting would have benefited from a systematic comparison with a number of other works. Most notable is the extensive literature on Northwest Coast "potlatch" systems such as Barnett (1938), Codere (1950, 1956), Drucker (1939), Piddocke (1965), and Suttles (1960). Henry (1951), Rappaport (1967a, 1967b, 1971) and Sahlins (1963) are also relevant.
23. As noted above, elderly bachelors and virgins are deemed to have an extremely difficult time in entering heaven, perhaps because they are not eligible to sponsor feasts though they may participate. Izikowitz (1951: 97, 332) has some comments on lineage fragmentation among the Lamet which are relevant here.
24. Among the more notable contributions to this debate are Levi-Strauss (1969), Leach (1951, 1954, 1962), Homans and Schneider (1955), and Needham (1958, 1962).

sort then can be seen as made up of *four* groups: Group I is Ego's own group, his patrilineage within which marriage is forbidden by an incest rule. Group II is a "wife-giver's" group from which Ego's group receive their wives. This group includes one's Mother's Brother who may then be equated with "Father-in-law," one's Wife's Brothers, and one's Mother's Brother's Daughter, who may be equated with Wife. Group III is a "wife-receiver's" group to which Ego's group gives women ("Sisters") as wives. This group includes one's Father's Sister, one's Sister's Husbands, and one's Father's Sister's Daughter. These three groups tend to be mutually exclusive. Group IV might be conceived of as a "residual" category of persons who might be classed in any of the three other categories but who are "distantly" related, i.e., operating at the periphery of the set of relations, so that their relationship to Ego's group may be changed by some new marriage alliance. It is this latter group which adds some flexibility to an otherwise extremely rigid system of marriage.²⁵ In systems of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, the presumption is that once an affinal relationship is established, either "wife-giving" or "wife-receiving," the relationship should be continued through time. Two points should be noted however: (a) such affinal relations are not *exclusive*, i.e., as long as one does not violate the prohibition (or strong disapproval) of "FZD" marriage, Ego's group can receive wives from a number of "wife-giving" groups (and, of course, the converse holds for the "wife-receivers" of Ego's group); (b) aside from this, the *actual* relations *do* change.

Leach has stressed the element of "political" status involved in the Kachin marriage system, and undoubtedly this is an extremely important factor in such systems. For purposes of my analysis I wish to stress the religious element which is *also* involved, and which I argue cannot easily be distinguished from the "political." Thus, where Leach argues that one's "wife-givers" are also "political superiors" and one's "wife-receivers" are one's "political inferiors," I would add that an important dimension of this is bound up with relative superiority or inferiority in ritual status as well. That is, one's feasting status, which has already been shown to be linked with the religious system, provides an objective standard for evaluating "worth" *both* "religious" and "political."

Let us look at some of the asymmetries involved in this set of affinal relations because they have important implications for the functioning of hill tribes society. I have argued that these societies are characterized by differences in ritual status (which seen from the standpoint of the actors involved might be characterized as differences in "ritual efficacy," "potency," etc.). What is actually sought in an affinal alliance from this viewpoint, then, is a relationship with the unit having highest ritual status. This implies that the women belonging to such units are seen as "more valuable" than women belonging to units of lower ritual status. In societies where status differentials are low (i.e., "democratic" societies), it should make relatively little difference (within the bounds of the incest taboo) with which other unit Ego's unit forms a marriage alliance. That is, we might expect that in such groups we should find: (a) low bride-prices (i.e., women are of roughly equivalent value) and (b) units which are fragmenting very rapidly (i.e., lineage depth is quite shallow).²⁶ Where differences in ritual status are high (i.e., "autocratic" groups), we should expect to find there will be a wide range in bride-prices, some "exorbitant" and others quite "low." It will become clear below that lineages and "clans" will also be important (have greater depth) in such groups. We might add parenthetically here that marriage price is seen not as a function of the status of the girl (as most ethnographers put it) or of the status of the groom (as Leach, 1954: 149, 151, suggests) but is a function of the status *differential* between the two.

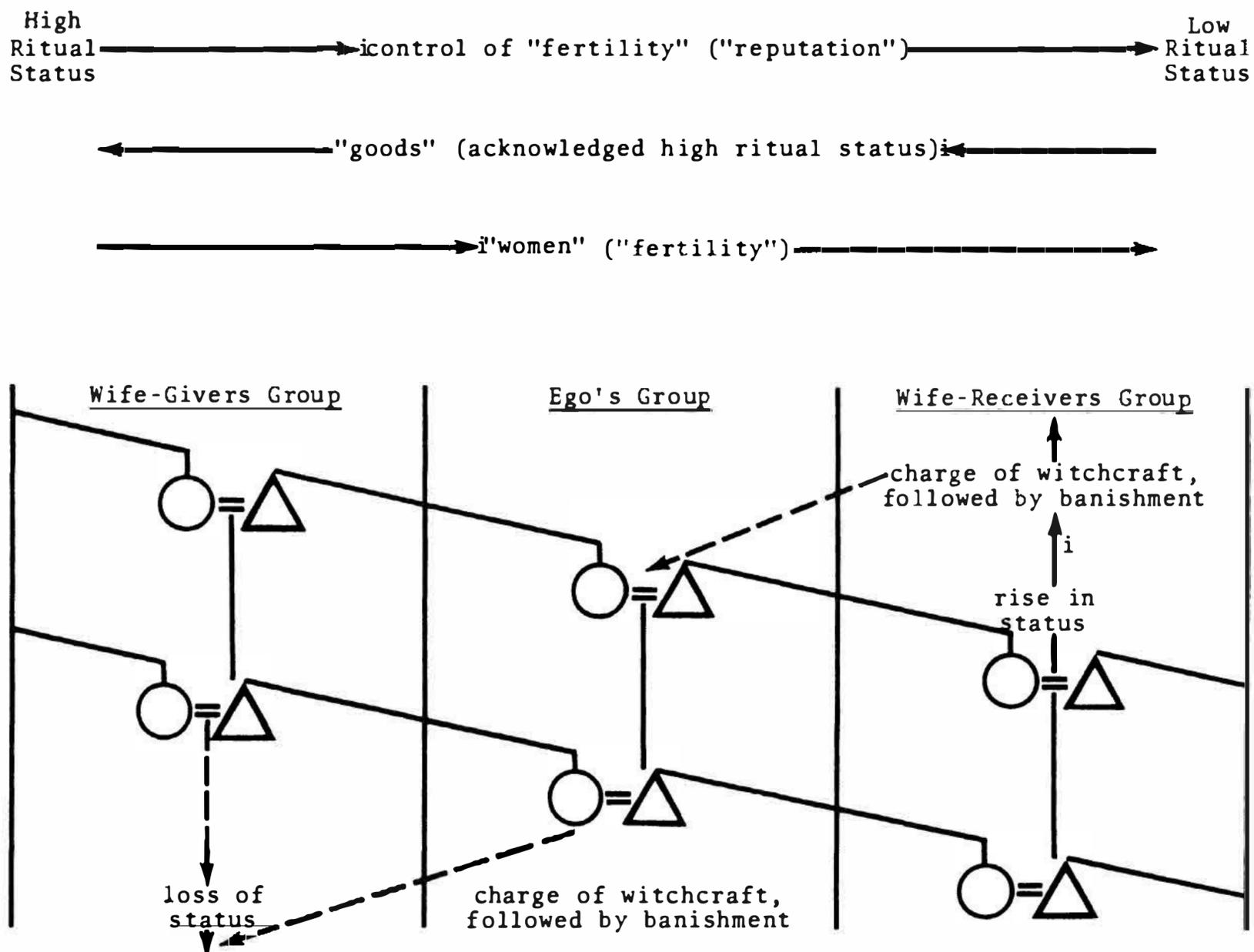
If we look at such a system from the perspective of a "wife-giver," it is clearly advantageous to conclude a marriage alliance with the unit having the highest ritual status available in the system and to get the highest bride-price possible. Since the relationship "wife-giver" implies ritual superiority, units actually having

25. Much of the discussion on matrilineal cross-cousin marriage systems has focused on the fact that three groups are the theoretical minimum for the functioning of such systems. But, as Leach brings out (1954: 73-85) among the Kachin there is a fourth group of "distant relatives" which seems to play a vital role in maintaining the stability of the marriage system. Kunstadter et al (1963) have discussed the importance of demographic factors in the functioning of systems of "preferential" marriage systems which is also of interest.

26. This point will be elaborated below; however, it involves a stress on the independence or autonomy of ritual status and the attempts by nuclear units to maximize this status.

Figure 1

AFFINITY AND WITCHCRAFT



This figure (following Leach, 1954: 181-2; 1963: 22ff.) indicates that changes in relative status of *either* wife-givers or wife-receivers is likely to result in charges of "witchcraft" directed towards the then lower ranking (as measured by *de facto* indices of rank, i.e., feasting success), followed by banishment or possibly death of the offending unit. This charge is understandable when we note that among most of the hill-tribes *close* association with the spirits, e.g., being a medium, being possessed, is also associated with the idea of lack of fertility or poverty. As Leach has noted, banishment or death of the offending unit restores the status relations to "normal" and the remaining unit, which brought the witchcraft charge, is then free to form a new relationship with some other appropriate unit. This further amplifies the point that the (ritual) rank element in this system of relations is given primacy over genealogical relationships.

higher ritual status will reject such a marriage alliance, so that the "wife-giving" unit must make the "best deal" from among the units willing to acknowledge lower ritual status. Having concluded the best alliance possible, it is also to the advantage of the "wife-giver" to stabilize this relationship, since it involves a unit of relatively high (but lower) ritual status, recognizing the higher ritual status of the "wife-giving" group. The implication of such a transaction is that the "wife-givers" have literally "given" the woman--since the women of this group are defined as "more valuable" than women of some other groups in the system, i.e., they are a "scarce good" sought after by many.²⁷ From the standpoint of the "wife-receiver," however, while it is advantageous to close one transaction with a particular unit of higher ritual status, it may, but more frequently may not, be advantageous to stabilize the relationship (i.e., treat it as a persisting relationship). It is to the "wife-receiver's" disadvantage to do so because such a stable relationship would fix him *permanently* in a relationship of acknowledged ritual inferiority to some other particular unit. The religious motivational system impels the "wife-receiver" (and all other units in the system) to maximize his ritual position. This is to say that a permanently fixed position of ritual inferiority is a "threat" to status advance. Viewed by the "wife-giver" the system should be "closed," but the "wife-receivers" must perceive it as "open." Because "wife-givers" are by definition of higher ritual status, they "control" the situation (e.g., in "democratic" groups they make up the "village council," in "autocratic" groups they are the "aristocrats" and "chiefs"). Thus, persons who attempt to change the existing system of relations may be open to sanction or punished. This may take the form of a fine, acknowledging the legitimacy of the existing set of relations, after which a new affinal relationship may be established. Of greater interest are those situations in which the actual difference in ritual status between two groups in an affinal relationship are reversed, particularly if it reaches the point that an attempt is made to reverse the affinal relationship to accord with the actual status differences. As Leach has noted, such situations are seen as "witchcraft" (Leach, 1954: 181-2). In any event, concluding such an alliance seems to entail "banishment" (see Figure 1). This banishment may be seen as a mechanism serving to stabilize relative ritual statuses *within* a particular locality. Thus, any one village may well appear to have a *stable* system of affinal relations conforming to the pattern of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Viewed "system-wide," however, the actual set of affinal relations is not only in *flux*, but it *cannot* be fixed. The expedient of "marriage in a circle" can only be a temporary one, given the values and the norms which define the functioning of the system. Ignoring this, we will show below that such "closed at the top" systems can not function empirically as well, because the attempt to close off the marriage-status system involves problems with the motivation of lower level members of the society. In such closed systems production (i.e., "fertility") is likely to decrease, evening out differences in ritual status, leading to "deposition," "usurpation," and "rebellion."

In this discussion we have not had recourse to the notion of a particular role for Mother's Brother, although the literature on matrilineal cross-cousin marriage makes much of this kinship figure. This would certainly be appropriate if the actors in the situation were behaving in conformity to purely genealogical considerations. I believe that this is only partially the case. It seems reasonably clear that if we have: (a) a rule to maximize one's own position by forming a (wife-receiving) marriage alliance with a unit of higher status than one's own--and (b) its converse of discouraging (wife-receiving) marriages with units of lower status (a rule provided by the logic of the religious system described here and guided by the statuses determined by feasting activity); and (c) the vested interest of higher status units in controlling and stabilizing this relationship by continuing affinal transactions; then, a system of preferential matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is likely to result (compare Leach, 1954: 255ff.). It also seems clear that, in any such system where status differences are great (i.e., "autocratic" groups) it is also advantageous for units at the top of the status system (or the set of marriage alliances) to describe it and try to treat it as a prescriptive marriage system. Indeed, where the people involved think of such a system of marriage relations as being composed of only a small number of groups--as "chiefs" think of it--they are virtually forced to treat the system as prescribed.²⁸

27. Leach (1954: 49) has noted the "paradox" of this situation. That is, wife-receivers are eager to pay the highest bride-price possible since this will raise their own status. Of course, it also tends to increase the range of status differences within the entire system as well.

28. While such a marriage system as that which I have described here might be conducive to the development of a kinship terminology such as that often associated

Regardless of whether or not the above discussion has any general theoretical interest, let me now bring forward some evidence which suggests that the relative ritual status of individuals really is an element in structuring affinal relations; that is, that "religious" considerations play a role in making marriage choices in hill tribes society. Let us note that among the Rengma a man may not quarrel with his wife's father "who is classed with, and often is, his mother's brother," and in the same discussion we learn that "a mother's brother is *like a god*" (Mills, 1937a: 137, italics added). Later we learn that the mother's brother "is a most important person whose enmity is believed to *cause sterility*; the husband must on no account quarrel with him, and if no children are born will make him . . . a present, in the hopes of thereby causing his wife to conceive" (Mills, 1937: 207f., italics added). Among the Sema, we find that "if otherwise suitable, marriage with the mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's son is preferred" (Hutton, 1941b: 132), "and a man may also marry his father's sister's daughter, though such marriages are regarded as unfertile" (Hutton, 1921b: 131). Indeed, for the Sema we find a classic indication of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, special terms for the groups "wife-giver" and "wife-receiver" (1921b: 143). With regard to the mother's brother (i.e., "father-in-law"), we find, "Among the Semas, as among other Naga tribes, the greatest respect is enjoined on a man for his mother's brother . . . it is a very serious matter to say anything to him at all which might give offense. . . . There is no social penalty attaching to a breach of this etiquette as the breach is believed to entail its own penalty of serious misfortune or death" (Hutton, 1921b: 137). Thus we see that there is a relationship between these persons standing in an affinal relationship of "wife-giver" and "fertility" or "supernatural sanctions."²⁹ Leach notes for the Kachin that "the mother feeds the child in her womb and at her breast and on that account a man's face (*myi-man*) comes from his maternal affines. This word for face, as in the Chinese equivalent, means 'reputation' as well as physiognomy" (Leach, 1963: 18). As we have already noted, however, "reputation" or "prestige" among the hill tribes must be treated in some measure as a *religious* quality. The Lamet situation parallels those already described, i.e., even after marriage a Lamet is still dependent upon his parents. After his wife has had a child, he has the possibility of breaking away from his patrilineal extended family and founding an independent unit "which often happens" (Izickowitz, 1951: 97) but in order to get children a man must provide a sacrifice for his wife's "ancestral spirits" which is performed by his wife's father (1951: 102) who is also classed as a man's mother's brother (1951: 96-7). Thus, the hill tribes see a relationship between one's "fertility" (which we have noted is a key religious concern) and one's affines. Further evidence with regard to the hill tribes marriage system and religion is summarized in Table 1 (see Appendix).

with matrilineal cross cousin marriage, it would not necessarily produce such a terminology. In situations where status differences are small and fluctuating rapidly and lineages are segmenting rapidly, i.e., "democratic" types situations, such a kinship terminology need not develop.

29. See Leach (1963: 18ff.) on relationships between affinity and mystical influence.

HILL TRIBES SOCIETY

Let us turn now from the religious system to a consideration of various aspects of hill tribes social life. To make the exposition somewhat easier, Table 1 summarizes a number of comparisons which seem to be significant. Leach has argued that Kachin "autocratic" (*gumsa*) and "democratic" (*gumlao*) types can be viewed as two extreme developments of the "same" social system, i.e., there is an oscillation between these two modes of organization. Since the "democratic" type seems to "develop into" the more "autocratic" type, and the "autocratic" type seems to "break down" into the "democratic" type, I will take the "democratic" type of structure as being in some sense a *basic* type. That is, in so far as the values and norms of the persons involved in these two types are the same, the structure of the "democratic" type more accurately reflects these values than does the "autocratic" type. Bear in mind, however, in the light of our previous discussion concerning hill tribes religion, that these "political" categories carry with them "religious" implications as well.

Given this assumption, let me briefly comment on how the contents of Table 1 were classified and how the table should be read. It must be emphasized that the contents of the table must be looked at both "relatively" and comparatively. For example, I have placed the Upper Lamet in the "autocratic" category, although *none* of the Lamet have "chiefs." However, on the basis of the ethnography and relative to the Lower Lamet, the Upper Lamet show certain features which indicate they are "more autocratic" than the Lower Lamet. One of the major criteria for this placement was the existence of a "class-endogamous" marriage structure. That is, in comparing the Upper Lamet with the Lower Lamet, Izikowitz reports that it is virtually impossible for a person lacking the status of *lem* (i.e., "rich man") to marry the daughter of a *lem*. This restriction is not as severe in the Lower Lamet (Izikowitz, 1951: 101). Taking the Lamet as a group, we would be inclined to treat them as "democratic" (as Izikowitz classifies them, 1951: 140), in comparison with the Sema Naga or the *gumsa* Kachin. Fortunately, the ethnographers have frequently classified these societies for us, and even made comparative statements concerning the various factors under consideration. In some instances, e.g., relative feasting frequency, there is no direct statement which indicates actual frequencies (indeed, absolute numbers might be completely misleading); however, other statements in the ethnography give some indication. For example, there is no direct evidence regarding feasting frequency among the West Rengma. There is a statement that the symbolic rewards for high feasting achievement (e.g., house decorations, clothing, etc.) are "very rarely seen" (Mills, 1937: 22). I take this as evidence that feasting achievement is infrequent which, when compared with other statements in the ethnography, enables us to classify relative feasting achievement.

A further problem is that much of the data being considered was gathered after these groups (with the exception of the Lamet who, however, have been influenced by the neighboring Thai and Lao) had been under fairly intensive colonial administration. Thus, some of the data recorded may be taken to reflect changes brought about by the colonial situation. An example of this is the changed frequencies of feasting between the Zanniat ("democratic") Chin and the Zahau ("autocratic") Chin. Stevenson's account indicates that formerly the Zanniat feasts were more frequent, and the Zahau feasts were less frequent than in the immediate pre-war period. He relates these changes to colonial influences, e.g., loosening of the Zanniat control of trade routes. Let me note that I am aware of these problems and have tried to make allowances for them. I will comment briefly on colonial influences later since they were consistent neither in their application nor in their effects..

With regard to other factors considered in Table 1, frequently there are no clues to fill in the blanks. Although I have sought for alternative clues if available, for certain categories some blanks remain. Because of these sometimes somewhat arbitrary procedures, I offer Table 1 and the following discussion as no more than a tentative classification and exposition of the ethnographic material under discussion.

"Democratic" Type Societies

In discussing the social structure of hill tribes society, one should bear in mind that the primary feasting (i.e., "religious") unit in *all* the hill tribes is the household, and secondly that marriage itself has "religious" significance. Beyond those religious factors spelled out above, marriage can be conceived of as a religious act since (a) it established a new feasting unit; (b) the qualities of the wife influence the status of the husband. This is not only due to the status implications of the affinal link to the wife's patri-lineage, but also because she contributes "fertility" directly--both through her bearing of children and her contributions in terms of "labor."³⁰

In "democratic" type societies, kinship units tend to be rather small, lineage depth quite shallow, segmentation of lineages rapid, and status differences between lineage segments are minimal or non-existent. One indication of this minimal status difference is that bride-prices are nominal and reports of restrictions on marriages between status groups (i.e., "classes") are rare. Pre-marital sexual permissiveness seems to be characteristic of these societies, and "adoption," in the form of actual assimilation into a different lineage, or "quasi-assimilation" through "bond-slavery" is either absent, objected to, or rare. From the standpoint of the social structure, it seems clear that in "democratic" societies *the ritual autonomy of the feasting unit is being emphasized at the expense of the maintenance of lineage ties.*

Although "democratic" villages tend to be small,³¹ there are a fairly wide number of marriage choices available to individuals. That is, the incest taboo is extended to a restricted range of persons, while status differences between lineage segments are minimal. In this situation, the primary problem for a man interested in maximizing his feasting status may be in getting a wife whose mobility motivation matches his, i.e., the qualities of the girl may be of greater importance than the qualities of her patrilineal kin. Thus, "sexual promiscuity" (and fairly high divorce rates) may reflect a searching to match up the qualities of the two partners (cf. the Ao failure of a couple's *tiya* ("souls") to match is given as the most frequent cause of Ao divorce; Mills, 1926: 224, 275).

Another characteristic of "democratic" societies is rarity of "adoption" and "bond-slavery." In the cases where adoption does occur in "democratic" societies, the ethnography suggests that it is due to the fact that one's own patrilineal kin cannot, or will not, assist the individual in becoming ritually independent, in particular with regard to providing a bride-price. In these cases of adoption, we see that *actual* lineage ties are subordinated to feasting autonomy; however, the evidence suggests that ritual autonomy is easy enough to maintain in "democratic" societies so that adoption is rarely resorted to.

The situation with regard to inheritance and succession is complex in "democratic" societies, but in general they seem to support the contention that the autonomy of households is emphasized. Although the youngest son is frequently a

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30. It is unfortunate that so little attention has been paid to the role and activities of women in these upland groups. Abstract models of marriage alliance, such as those of Levi-Strauss (1969), Leach (1951, 1954) and Needham (1958, 1962), tend to treat women as passive counters exchanged between groups of men. Izikowitz (1951: 298ff., 303ff.) is one of the few ethnographers who has noted the important contributions of women to status achievement in these groups. Far from being passive pawns Izikowitz (1951: 102) has observed that women may strive to enhance their own dowry and hence the bride-price they may command. Among many of these upland groups (e.g., Angami, Ao, Lhota) women frequently initiate divorce (see also Leach, 1963b: 114-123)a It is clear that women are as vitally concerned with achievement of status within these groups as are men.
31. There are some exceptions to this. For example among the Angami Naga where villages are organized around terraces, or among the Zanniat Chin where they control trade routes. This situation deserves further consideration because both Leach (1954: 255) and Stevenson (1943: 17) observe ease of migration serves as an important limitation on the potentially despotic demands of chiefs. Thus, in a situation which is believed to be conducive to highly "autocratic" regimes we find some apparently highly "democratic" groups. Perhaps the inheritance rules among these seemingly anomalous groups ensure that no single lineage segment can retain highest ritual status at the expense of all other lineage segments.

"residual" heir, efforts are made to give all sons independent ritual status, in particular assuring them a bride-price and cultivation rights. Broadly, the tendency is towards equalization of inheritance whether by distributing property before death of the parent, or by taking account on the decease of the parent of whether a given son's bride-price has already been paid.

Of possible interest here is the fact that among some "democratic" groups, e.g., the Lower Lamet, the Lhota, and some Angami, we rarely find clear-cut village boundaries. This suggests that *individual* ritual is seen as more powerful, or as more important than community ritual. Thus, individuals may expand (or contract) production at their own discretion. The data concerning the Zanniat Chin are not completely clear in this regard; however, individuals may "inherit" any number of plots in a swidden block. In contrast, the "autocratic" Zahau permit an individual to "inherit" only one plot in a swidden field. This seems to suggest that farm plots in "democratic" societies are free to vary in proportion to the motivation of the individual to produce (i.e., sponsor feasts). Farm plots in "autocratic" groups are restricted --possibly due to the vested ritual control of "chiefs."

Another factor which *may* be of some significance with regard to "democratic" societies is the existence of "community houses" (*morungs, cong*), although they are not universally found in all of the groups classed here as "democratic," nor completely absent from groups classed as "autocratic." The "community house" generally serves as the ritual center for the men of the community, as opposed to the household or lineage. The *morung* may be seen as a feature which fosters the easy fragmentation of lineages at the level of nuclear households, rather than some more extensive lineage unit. Where the "community house" occurs, it serves to separate the younger people (particularly young men) from their parents' households. This may help to weaken lineage ("vertical") loyalties by emphasizing *individual* (or non-lineage) contributions to the community ("horizontal") feasting complex.³²

With regard to the feasting system in "democratic" groups, we find that there is high motivation to perform the "feasts of merit" which simultaneously raise one's secular and one's religious status(es). These feasts appear to be not only relatively large, and fairly frequent, but the feast series itself appears to be somewhat more elaborate as well.

The subordination of lineage loyalties to other ("horizontal") loyalties is by no means complete. There is good evidence that, despite the tendencies to lineage segmentation characteristic of democratic societies, there are also tendencies toward lineage solidarity. Accounts of the extremely litigious nature of these "democratic" groups show that in conflicts one's "relatives" (presumably lineage-mates) support one's claims. Note, however, that this litigation centers primarily around ritual status, possibly intensified in "democratic" groups where status differentials are relatively small (i.e., small differences in status may take on great meaning). The most striking instance of conflict over ritual rights may be that of the Angami Naga "riots," resulting from the construction of stone memorials (Hutton, 1921a: 47). Despite any tendencies toward lineage solidarity, the high value which "democratic" societies place on the oaths of individuals suggests that it is still primarily the individual householder who is the locus of ritual efficacy and regard.

Thus, I am arguing that in the "pure democratic" case virtually every element in the society may be seen as subordinated to the demands of achieving ritual status through the feasting system. Unfortunately, there are not many "pure democratic" societies. Later, I will suggest how we might classify these various societies along a "continuum" of development from some hypothesized "pure democratic" condition to a condition of "pure autocracy." As Leach has noted for the Kachin, the "democratic" condition is ephemeral, and the "autocratic" condition is no more stable (Leach, 1954: 210f.). The actual situation seems to be more complex than can be accounted for by "inconsistencies" in the ideal order. I will now characterize the "autocratic" type of society before returning to the problem of variations within each of these two types.

"Autocratic" Type Societies

In performing feasts, households are given both symbolic and practical rewards. Among the symbolic rewards are rights to personal and households adornments, and

32. Mills (1937: 50) has some interesting speculations about the psychological effects of the *morung*, particularly with respect to minimizing intergenerational conflicts.

exaggerated "respect" in action as well as in speech. Among the practical rewards are rights to larger shares in the feasts of others, preferential treatment in the allocation of swidden plots, increased bride-prices for daughters, and, possibly, labor dues. Differences in feasting success lead to differences in ritual status and differences of "advantage." As Leach has noted (1954: 163f.), persons who succeed in feasting become the foci for the development of lineages, i.e., it becomes worthwhile for those individuals who are *not* successful to claim, or to stress already recognized, kinship ties with successful feasters, rather than asserting their own feasting autonomy. We might characterize "autocratic" societies as those in which ritual advantages have "piled up" or been "captured" by individuals (or by lineage segments). In most of the autocratic groups, a "chief's" ritual role with regard to community fertility is well developed.

Contrasting "autocratic" type societies with the "democratic" type, we find that kin units tend to be larger; in particular, lineage depth is greater, lineage segmentation is slower, and may involve differences in status between the various segments of the same lineage. In "autocratic" societies generally, status differences are marked. Notably there may be "class" differences which cross-cut lineages. This difference in status is indicated, in part, by the occurrence of "exorbitant" bride-prices for higher status women, while "commoner" women may be quite "inexpensive." This status and bride-price differential may be linked with tendencies toward "class" (status) endogamy. Pre-marital sexual freedom is restricted, especially for high status girls.

While the rewards accruing to successful feast givers tend to give them an advantage over others in continuing their feasting progress, the "ritual economy" also tends to become richer and more complex. Surpluses which are not used directly in the feasting system (e.g., "surplus" rice) are used to obtain non-utilitarian "heirloom" objects, e.g., "ancestral *daos*" ("swords"), gongs, drums, etc. These objects enter the ritual economy through the mechanism of the bride-price system, serving to make ultimate feasting success more difficult and thereby tending to increase and rigidify status differences. Heirloom objects also become important in structuring lineages because the problem of inheritance becomes increasingly important.³³

Setting aside the problem of inheritance for the moment, let me suggest some other factors which contribute to the development of lineages, and some of the implications of this development. Differences in ritual status arise first in household units. Affinal alliances with successful households are defined as being more "valuable" than alliances with less successful households. Note two factors which are involved here: (a) the enhanced status of the household makes alliances with it, as a *unit*, more valued than with other possible units; (b) the higher status of the household, resulting from feasting success, implies a high motivational commitment by *all* the members of the household to achieve ritual status (since all members of the unit contribute to its feasting resources). Thus, not only is an alliance with the household as a unit valuable, but there is also a presumption that the *daughters* of the household also have qualities which make them desirable as marriage partners. Both of these factors are reflected in higher bride-prices. But higher bride-prices for daughters, coupled with feasting success, mean that the household can (and *must*, to maintain its *relative* position) use some of its extra resources to form affinal links with other more successful (i.e., ritually higher) households.

This latter factor involves a process which we might call "centrifugal pressures." Where there are no marked status differences between groups (households or lineage segments), it makes relatively little difference (within the bounds of the kinship system and the incest taboo) *where* one gets a wife. That is, village endogamy is at least a possibility for all. Where status differences occur, and where lineages are becoming increasingly important, village endogamy becomes increasingly difficult to maintain--particularly for successful feast-givers. They must seek their wives in other localities, from the daughters of men who have been effective in acquiring high ritual status. These "centrifugal pressures" lead to several developments: (a) they tend to rigidify lineages; (b) they tend to rationalize the feasting system over a wider area; (c) they tend to drain resources out of the localized ritual economy and place them into a supra-local ritual economy; (d) they make feasting achievement more difficult; (e) they lead to the development of what might be termed first a "lineage" ideology and eventually a "clan" ideology. Hutton and Mills characterize the Naga situation as one of "an exogamous system which is in the

33. And, it should be noted, the value of the goods which are involved in this "ritual economy" is not determined solely by economic criteria, cf. Leach (1954: 144) and Stevenson (1943: 164ff.).

process of breaking down" (Mills, 1922: 87). I would suggest that a more accurate description might be that this is a "clan" system "building up." It seems clear that in "autocratic" groups the ritual elements involved in lineage and affinal relations tend to become increasingly important at the expense of the relative importance of the feasting system. Such a system might even develop to the point where the "feasts of merit" drop out completely and ritual achievement is totally linked with marriage alliances and the feasting associated with marriages.³⁴ Such a development would not be surprising since mobilization of resources for a high bride-price may be seen as the functional equivalent of motivation for ritual advancement (i.e., feasting) and indicates a degree of control over external forces (i.e., one's lineage-mates and affines). We might say then that these factors increase any tendencies to the maintenance of "vertical" (i.e., "lineage") bonds at the expense of "horizontal" (individual and community) bonds. Put in another way, as status differences develop and increase in these groups, the advantages of maintaining lineage bonds begin to outweigh the advantages of setting up an autonomous ritually achieving unit. This does not imply that the desire to be ritually efficacious is lessened, but rather that, as the ritual economy becomes more complex, ritual efficacy becomes more closely linked to lineage advantages and to the marriage system.

As I have indicated, development of status differences through relative feasting success fosters the development of bride-price differentials, lineage formation, and local exogamy. "Autocratic" type society, however, is not simply one of differentiated "lineages" and "clans." The same factors which favor the development of "lineages" also favor the development of "classes" distinguished by feasting success or lack of success. These are the "noble" *vs.* the "commoner" groups, although in the most autocratic groups the "noble" class may be further distinguished by membership in "chiefly" *vs.* "aristocrat" lineage segments. The feasting system tends to build up status differences, while the marriage system, particularly the bride-price mechanism, tends to increase and rigidify them. "Class-endogamous" marriages between groups of successful feasters develop; however, these sets of marriage alliance are never completely closed. Mobility upwards is always possible through feasting achievement, and mobility downwards due to failure to meet ritual requirements is also possible (see Leach, 1954: 163). While lineages are developing, the *qualities* of persons belonging to these various lineage segments are seen increasingly as a function of lineage membership rather than as *personal* qualities (i.e., ascriptive elements become more important than achievement elements). Marriage then becomes less a matter of matching up individual motivations for achievement and more a matter of forming advantageous links with other lineage segments, distinguished on the basis of their feasting performance. Thus, in "autocratic" groups pre-marital sexuality (for high status girls) tends to be minimized as status differences become maximized and rigidified. (See also Leach, 1963: 114-123.)

Two other factors found widely in "autocratic" groups contribute to the increasing internal complexity of "lineages" and the development of "classes": "adoption" and "bond-slavery." For those who are highly motivated towards ritual achievement, there are "strains" which result from being born in a ritually disadvantages lineage (i.e., a "commoner" lineage). If he is highly motivated *and* successful, he can aspire to "adoption" into a more "noble" lineage which will provide his bride-price, and one which will give him greater means to ritual advancement. "Bond-slavery" may also function to increase one's ritual achievement (see Stevenson, 1943: 177ff.). However, for those who are poorly motivated, or are unskillful, etc., bond-slavery and "quasi-assimilation" into a more successful lineage provide vicarious rewards which may partially compensate for reducing personal feasting achievement. (We might note that the marriage system forces these people into this situation since they find it difficult to act as "wife-givers" to anyone (which would imply ritual superiority) and thereby cannot accumulate the resources for their own bride-prices.) In either case, the receiving lineage finds it advantageous to accept these new "members" because they strengthen its position vis-à-vis other contending lineages. Note that both "adoption" and "bond-slavery" tend to increase the size of lineages, fostering the development of a "clan" ideology, and increase the internal complexity of lineages, fostering the development of "classes." This process is going on at the expense of *actual* genealogical relations.

It might be fruitful to briefly consider the status of the "kinship units" characteristic of the hill tribes since both Leach and I would agree that these societies are far more flexible than native informants' remarks about the relations of kinship units would suggest. Leach notes that the *gumlao* ("democratic") Kachin view themselves as being all of "one clan" through a "fiction" (1954: 124, 206). The *gumsa*

34. Perhaps this may have been the case among the Lakhers (Parry, 1932).

Kachin on the other hand view *their* society as being made up of a limited number of inter-marrying "clans." Leach points out that this picture of society is equally a "fiction," i.e., it is not an accurate portrayal of the empirical relations between groups (1954i 106). I would suggest that the development of such an ideology is the direct outgrowth of the interplay of the religious ritual elements of these groups. That is, while kinship factors play an important role, they may be *secondary* to the religious factors sketched out above. When the "autocratic" Kachin talk about their society as if it were made up of a few inter-marrying clans, they may not be referring to *actual, kinship-defined* units, but to groups of people who are ritually differentiated, but united by following similar "sets of customs." Membership in these groups is determined primarily by considerations of "religious self-interest," not solely by kinship criteria. Similarly, the "fictive" democratic clan may be seen as a group of people who have ordered their ritual life in a way that conforms to and defines a "democratic" type of society. As Leach (1954: 106, 198) notes, this does not involve a rejection of the ritual language (or the *values*) which may be common to both "autocratic" and "democratic" groups. The "democratic" order does involve the rejection of the notion that ritual advantage and ritual excellence can be *ascribed exclusively* to any one unit.³⁵

Other features distinguish "autocratic" type societies from "democratic" type societies. While "community houses" are found in some of the "autocratic" groups, in those groups which appear to be "most autocratic" they are absent (i.e., *gumsa* Kachin, Zahau Chin, Sema Naga).ⁱ I would suggest that this may be related to two features of "autocratic" societies: (a) the increasing importance of lineages, and (b) the "capture" of ritual control of community fertility by "chiefly" lineage segments. With regard to the first factor, as lineages become increasingly important, lineage ritual and control is also enhanced at the expense of community oriented ritual, which tends to cross-cut lineage ritual. "Rich men's" houses, the foci of lineage formation, usurp some of the functions of the "community house." The second factor seems to be of greater significance for the "most autocratic" groups.ⁱ Here, "chiefs" have exclusive rights to the ritual controlling regional fertility. The "community house" as a separate entity becomes merged with the house of the "chief." That is, the "chief's" house becomes the ritual center for the community and the "community house" drops out.³⁶

The capture of community ritual power by "chiefly" lineage segments may also involve the marking out of village boundaries.ⁱ In "democratic" groups, where diffuse ritual control is vested more in households than in lineages, there may be no precise boundaries. The implication is that the boundaries of ritual control are left up to the individuals concerned. When control of community fertility is vested in the hands of a "chief," this formerly diffuse ritual power becomes increasingly specified. The area within which the "chief's" power is effective is indicated by boundaries, beyond which his ritual efficacy is not extended.

In "autocratic" societies, there is no indication that feasting is any less important a motivational factor in status mobility; however, the empirical situation

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35. From this perspective it is interesting to note that the "autocratic" Sema use the same word for "clan" as for "custom" (Hutton, 1921b: 125). The "democratic" Ao refer to "religion" as a "set of customs" (Mills, 1926: 414). Leach (1954: 128) also observes that the Kachin term for "maximal lineage" (*amyu*) can also be translated as "kind" or "sort." Hence, the same Kachin utterance might be translated as "He is of a chiefly lineage" and/or "He is of the chiefly kind (of persons)."
36. If the "community house" were a basic component of hill tribes society one might well ask why the community house does not "redevelop" in those "democratic" groups which are the offshoots of the "most autocratic" groups? This might be related to the fact that while these systems are being analyzed "relatively" they are also developing "absolutely." That is, the "democratic" groups which revolt from "autocratic" groups do not return to an absolute zero ritual economy, but to a situation in which differences in ritual status are *relatively* minimized within the group. Hence, they may retain some surplus wealth in the form of heirlooms, etc. Stevenson's (1943i 17) data on the Chin suggests, for example, that some of the "democratic" groups had a ritual economy which, if measured absolutely, would have been greater than that of nearby "autocratic" groups. (I might add that viewed from the perspective of 1973 rather than 1964 when it was written, the discussion of the significance of the *morung* would have been substantially modified if time permitted.)

leads to fewer and smaller feasts being performed.³⁷ Several factors may be related to this: (a) the "autocratic" ritual economy tends to become increasingly complex, and advantage is vested in some lineage segments at the expense of others; (b) the positions of the "chiefs" (and other "officials") develop and are marked by special "dues" which, though small in themselves, act as a drain on the feasting economy; (c) the increasing links *outside* the locality siphon off resources which might be used in the local feasting economy into the supra-local ritual economy. These factors tend to make feasts generally more difficult to perform, particularly for those already unsuccessful households (and lineage segments).

The increasing difficulty of mobilizing resources to perform feasts and the exclusive ritual control vested in the "chief" seem to influence motivational levels. For at least some "commoners," motivation tends to become routinized. That is, "commoners" are willing (or forced by circumstances) to become "bond-slaves" dependent on some more successful unit, rather than independent strivers for ritual autonomy. This implies, however, that they do not maximize their own production. Hence they may also act as a drag on the more successful units to which they are attached, since their "masters" are committed to giving up some of their resources to support the "bond slaves." Thus, in "autocratic" groups, the sum of resources available for the ritual economy tends to decrease, a process which seems to be confirmed by the ethnography.

Feasting and Motivational Levels

Unfortunately, there is little direct evidence regarding the relative levels of motivation in "democratic" versus "autocratic" societies. There is some indirect evidence which seems to support this conclusion. For example, at least some of the "autocratic" groups are specifically reported as "less litigious" than "democratic" groups, and that personal oaths (particularly from those of "non-aristocratic" status) are not highly regarded. This seems to support our contention that status lines are more rigidly defined in "autocratic" groups (therefore fewer quarrels over ritual rights). In contrast to an emphasis on general *personal* "integrity" in "democratic" societies, in "autocratic" societies only those of higher status have internalized norms of what we might call "personal honor." This may be tied to Hutton's (1921b: 150) observation that "in most Sema villages the chieftain families form an aristocracy in the literal sense of the word, being . . . physically, morally, and intellectually the best of the community." That is, in "autocratic" societies the "class" difference between "noble" and "commoner" is linked with a deep-seated difference in psychological outlook and different standards of personal worth. Another indicator of this motivational difference might be Furer-Haimendorf's observation that Konyak ("autocratic") commoners who serve as porters prefer to share their jobs with several men (and also share the pay), whereas the Angami ("democratic") porter prefers to carry "a full load and receiving the whole wage for himself" (1939i: 99). It is also suggestive that the "more democratic" Lower Lamet spend most of the year on their farm plots while the "less democratic" Upper Lamet spend much less time in the fields (Izickowitz, 1951: 64).

For several of the "autocratic" groups there is evidence of "population pressure" on the land. Clearly there are empirical factors which influence such pressures on land, e.g., differential birth and death rates, differences in soil fertility, etc. Aside from this, there are social factors operating as well. Although the rights to cultivate in any particular area controlled by any one village are restricted, broadly speaking, land must be seen as a "free good," i.e., there are no restrictions on moving to an unpopulated area and starting a new village. Ties to any particular locality are ritual ties. A part of this population pressure can be seen as a reflection of the "chief's" ritual powers to a defined and specified locality, and a part of it can also be attributed to a lowering of motivation and decreasing production. Older sons of a "chief" set up "colonies" (note that this may be seen as an attempt at ritual autonomy on the part of "chief's" older sons), draining off some of the more highly motivated from the parent village--leaving the less highly motivated behind. Eventually, "the ability (of the parent village) to throw off colonies has ceased" (Hutton, 1921b: 148). This leads to a lowering of status

37. It may be that the uplanders themselves perceive this relationship. This is at least suggested by the Kachin myth recorded by Leach (1954i: 200ff.) in which *gumlao* villages are characterized as exceptionally prosperous and capable of high levels of feasting in contrast to *gumsa* villages. See also the Lhota myth recorded in Mills (1922: 5).

differences within the parent village, squabbles over precedence among "aristocrats," eventual "deposition," or "usurpation," and possibly "revolt."³⁸

This situation implies some other things with regard to the feasting system and the society. Of most interest is that, while feasts become increasingly more difficult to perform, the status implication of giving feasts increases. That is, the status increment for giving a feast in an "autocratic" group might be seen as greater than giving a feast in a "democratic" group. This brings us back to the problem of inheritance and succession. The rules of inheritance and succession for all the hill tribes appear to be extremely complex; however, in "autocratic" groups there is some tendency for the youngest son to have an especially favored place. Let me suggest how the feasting system, particularly in "autocratic" groups, may contribute to this.

Ultimogeniture and Primogeniture

In all the hill tribes, one of the household's major responsibilities is to provide a bride-price for each son. The affinal relations of sons has ritual status implications for both the son's household and for the parental unit. The feasting progress of the parental household is one of the key factors in evaluating the suitability of any match--from the standpoint of both "wife-givers" and "wife-receivers." It is also clear that status position is both relative and progressive. To maintain its relative status vis-à-vis other units, a household must *continue* to give feasts and to form favorable marriage alliances for both sons and daughters. The symbolic and practical rewards for feasting help in making this possible; however, especially in "autocratic" groups, the prestige increment for progressive feasting success is high. Further, in such groups the prestige accruing from this success is viewed as a quality of the sponsoring unit rather than of the particular individual. Whether the eldest son strikes off to set up his own "colony," as occurred in some "autocratic" groups, e.g., Sema, Kachin, or remained behind, setting up his own independent household, the younger son, who remains longer with the parental unit, benefits from the highest prestige increments of later feasts performed by the parental unit. Aside from this, to maintain the relative position of the parental unit, the youngest son must be provided with a larger bride-price than his older brothers. Thus, the "autocratic" type society becomes internally differentiated on the basis of ritual efficacy into "classes," and the higher ranking lineages also become internally differentiated along a similar axis based on relative age (compare Leach, 1954: 206ff.).

The peculiar importance of the eldest son and/or the youngest son in hill tribes society suggests that their special place in the ritual life of the parental unit serves to distinguish them from any other brothers.³⁹ The eldest son is the actual and symbolic indicator of the ritual independence of his parent's household--in particular its efficacy in securing a high status affinal relationship, which we have noted is the functional equivalent of feasting success. The youngest son, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the highest ritual position achieved by the parental unit. In highly "autocratic" regimes, where the prestige increment for progressive feasting success is great, and where the parental unit mobilizes a very high bride-price for the youngest son, he becomes of higher ritual status than his brothers, and the "heir" of his father's ritual position. A rule of "ultimogeniture" tends to develop where differentials in ritual status are at a maximum. Note, however, that as motivational levels go down, status differences decrease and the parental village loses its ability to "colonize"; status differences between brothers also narrow, leading to internal conflicts over precedence.

Influences of External Groups

We may now return to a problem I postponed earlier, the influence of external groups. We can distinguish three types of external influences which might affect

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38. It would appear that this process was taking place in Hpalang, the Kachin village observed by Leach. Similar processes are suggested by comments in Hutton (1921b: 152) and Mills (1937: 138ff.).
39. Although Leach (1954: 109, 156, 261) chooses to emphasize the rule of ultimogeniture among the Kachin his discussion suggests that their rules of inheritance and succession are more complex than a rule of ultimogeniture. Such complexity would certainly be consistent with what is found in other upland groups.

the hill tribes: (a) other hill tribes, (b) indigenous valley dwellers (e.g., the Shan), (c) colonial influences. I will reserve comment on the mutual influences of the hill tribes till later when I will suggest a particular way of looking at these relationships. Let me turn then to the influence of the valley dwelling societies on the hill tribes.

Leach has suggested that the "model" of Shan political relations had an important influence on the development of Kachin autocratic (*gumsa*) type societies. My argument has been that such autocratic societies can be seen as a natural development of the interplay of factors *within* hill tribes society itself. As a system, hill tribes society tends to develop in the direction of the theoretical model of such societies suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1949), Leach (1963) and others. This theoretical model may be seen as a "limit" of the system. As these groups approach this limit more closely, ascriptive elements become increasingly important at the expense of achievement elements. The *value* of maximizing ritual status does not change, nor the *mode* of manifesting this ritual status, but the *means* to achieving this end become linked more closely to advantages tied to groups. Society becomes differentiated "vertically" into "lineages" and "clans" and "horizontally" into classes of "nobles" and "commoners." Some "commoners" are so disadvantaged that their motivation to achieve decreases and they merge with other units (i.e., they become "slaves"). One factor in this is that their status has become so low that they cannot give their daughters away--which also implies that cannot accumulate a bride-price to receive wives from someone else. Their status problems are solved by becoming "slaves." For the top nobility (i.e., "chiefs") the problem is similar. In their case, everyone wants their women but they cannot find women to marry without the implication of ritual inferiority. They can temporarily follow the expedient of "marrying in a circle" but this implies status equality, and "chiefs" are extremely highly motivated to maximize their status position. In this situation, they are virtually *forced* to recruit wives from "outside" (i.e., from valley dwellers) in much the same way that village "endogamy" becomes impossible once status differences develop. This solution to the problem is itself inadequate because it still *fixes* the status hierarchy. The valley dwellers from whom they recruit wives do not follow the same "rules." As Leach has noted, when this point is reached, hill tribes society becomes the functional analogue of the valley society. The "chief's" ritual status becomes the equivalent of the Shan "divine-king," and he must treat his "relatives" as "slaves," i.e., cut them off from status achievement. For those "nobles" who are oriented toward achieving status, this justifies "revolt," turning back the clock of status differences into a "democratic" system. Such a situation does not affect the status of the "slaves" since they have already routinized their status aspirations--but in so doing, they are no longer producing at a maximum, and thus they reduce the ability of the "chief" to demonstrate his status by giving feasts, i.e., the "fertility" which the chief is able to manifest. This leads to the kind of situation which Leach found in the village of Hplang, or that among the Sema (Hutton, 1921b: 152), the Rengma (Mills, 1937: 138), and the Konyak (Furer-Haimendorf, 1939i 47ff.), i.e., squabbles over ritual status between various groups within a locality. This situation is also highly unstable.

Leach discusses another kind of influence which the valley-dwelling societies may have on hill tribes society, but which is perhaps best described by Izikowitz for the Lamet. This influence is the introduction of economic resources from outside the indigenous hill tribes economy.⁴⁰ For the Lamet, this influence was greatest among the Upper Lamet and seems to have been an important factor in increasing status differences among them between those of *lem* ("rich man") and non-*lem* status. Young men who were status-mobile went to Siam to obtain the wherewithal necessary to make a high status marriage. This tends to decrease the importance of vertical (lineage) loyalties as Izikowitz notes (1951: 100, 140), but it also makes status mobility within the group more difficult since the ritual economy is enriched by resources not produced locally. Such a factor may have played a part in the development of "age-grading" as found among the Ao Naga (Mills, 1926) (since it undermines lineage loyalties and enhances "horizontal" loyalties). Another influence which the valley dwellers may have had but which is impossible to determine with the available evidence is the rationalization of the indigenous religious system. Izikowitz' evidence suggests that Lamet religion may have been changing because of introduction of Thai-Lao religious rites and ideas, e.g., *phi*, *baci*.

Colonial influence is difficult to measure because it was both complex and uneven. Leach has noted that colonial officers tended to approve of more "autocratic"

40. Piddocke's (1965) discussion of the Kwakwiltl potlatch suggests that the introduction of external resources might have highly significant effects on the ritual system of the uplanders.

regimes, showing great distaste for the "anarchic" democratic type. Broadly, the colonial influence tended to increase the number of autocratic type groups and to stabilize status relations (Leach, 1954: 245).

There were some unexpected results which are of interest. Let us consider two cases, the Chin and the Rengma. The British colonial regime established a "chief" in the "democratic" Chin area and enforced his authority. The "democratic" Chin were oriented to status achievement but achievement was artificially limited by the position of the imposed chief. One interesting result of this was the development of a "nativistic" movement, a syncretic cult which repudiated community feasts (which enhance the status of "chiefs") while retaining *private* feasts (which raise *individual* status).a Stevenson reports that this *Pau Chin Hau* cult had been adopted by "almost the entire Zanniat (democratic) tribe" and about 27% of the whole Chin population in his subdivision (Stevenson, 1943: 161ff.). Thus the "democratic" Chin were able to retain their orientation to personal feasting achievement and ritual status mobility in the face of an arbitrary restriction on status.

The Rengma, on the other hand, seem to have been "retrogressing" from a more "autocratic" to a more "democratic" type system even before the colonial power was imposed. Although the British established "headmen," they seem to have increased the tendencies to "democratization" through the establishment of a "tribal court" operating outside of the village context. Disputes over ritual status which would ordinarily have been determined by the "village council" (composed of those who had demonstrated their ritual status through feasting success) were treated as "legal" disputes by the British court. As Mills comments with obvious disapproval, "the result is that nowadays every man in a Rengma village is a good deal better than his neighbor" (Mills, 1937: 140). Thus, while the colonial regime tended to fix status differences and to favor "autocratic" regimes, in some instances the colonial apparatus encouraged equalization of statuses or led to radical changes in the religious system.

Classifying the Hill Groups

Let us turn finally to the problem of classifying the various hill tribes collectively. I have been arguing that each of these groups may be seen as developing along an analytical continuum from a "democratic" to an "autocratic" type of system. In the following table (see Figure 2), I have arranged these different groups to suggest one mode of ranking them along such a continuum. It will be noted that I have included some sub-groups mentioned in the ethnography which indicate that *none* of these groups is a "pure" type, i.e., *within* most of these groups there are differences in degree of democratic-autocratic development. Thus, the three "dialect" groups which Mills reports for the Ao can also be ranked as "more" or "less" democratic, the Sema Naga have three variants of "religious ritual" which may be equated with differences along this dimension (Hutton, 1921b: 219), while Leach reports that the Gauri are "more autocratic" than the "ordinary Kachin" (Leach, 1963: 118). I have chosen to take the presence to absence of a "community" house as one of the major variables in classifying these groups, the "present" category being further subdivided by "degree of importance" of the community house, as indicated in the ethnography. These categories are relatively unambiguous for purposes of classification. The other major dimension is "level of ritual economy-degree of status differentiation." The placement of any one group along this dimension and in relation to any other group is even more arbitrary. Indeed, a "multi-dimensional" model would be more appropriate. There are some clues in the ethnography which have been used in assigning positions along this dimension. Perhaps the most questionable assignment is that of placing the Lhota "above" the Ao. The primary factor used in this placement was the report that Lhota lineages segment into "big" and "little" sublineages (Mills, 1922: 91) which suggests that the lineage system is more developed among the Lhota--which might be expected given Ao age-grading. The East Rengma are placed at roughly the same "level" as the Angami because they are reported to have "borrowed" terracing and religious ritual from the Angami (Mills, 1937: 86).a The Lhota are placed at approximately the same "level" as the West Rengma because both groups agree that they were "till recently one group" (Mills, 1937: 4). Similar criteria were used in the placement of the other groups where available, but frequently placement was done intuitively on the basis of the "feel" of the ethnography.

We might hypothesize another, more abstract picture of the process of this development from "democratic" type to "autocratic" type. This model would resemble the familiar "branching tree" model of biological evolution. (But differing from

Figure 2

CLASSIFICATION OF HILL-TRIBES

Democratic \longrightarrow Autocratic

High
 \uparrow
 level of ritual economy and degree of status differentiation
 \downarrow
 Low

Community House Present and Important	Community House Present Less Important	Community House Absent
Lhota {North South}	West Rengma {South North}	<i>gumsa</i> K. {Gauri "ordinary"}
Ao {Chongli Mongsen Changki}	Sema {Sema Angami Sangtam ?}	Zahau Chin
East Rengma Upper Lamet	Angami {West East}	Zanniat Chin <i>gumlao</i> Kachin
Lower Lamet		

the biological model, in that the social model is inverted and has a single theoretical limit towards which it is developing.) In this model, the "base" of the tree will be broader than the apex (i.e., the "autocratic" type). There does not seem to be any narrowly defined "lower limit" for the "democratic" type. Thus we find greater structural complexity among "democratic" groups than among "autocratic" groups. For example, the Lamet lineage segments at an extremely fast rate, while the Ao Naga have developed a system of "age-grades" which tend to focus achievement of ritual status along a "horizontal" dimension--inhibiting the development of stable lineages. As these systems develop, they keep "throwing off" groups which are in part replications of the parental group, and in part adaptations to particular local conditions, or to "historical accidents." However, as development approaches the "autocratic" limit, they become structurally more similar. Thus, the "more autocratic" systems show less variation than do the "more democratic" systems.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Leach has demonstrated that the Kachin, far from being a fixed and stable society with a single perduring social structure can best be viewed as being in a state of continuous flux, oscillating between two ideal social forms. Areas which once had "democratic" regimes are now "autocratic" and vice versa. The evidence from a number of other upland groups in Southeast Asia suggests that this situation is not confined to the Kachin but is considerably more widespread.

We might ask, if these upland peoples do exist in a state of continuous change, how is it that western observers failed for so many years to recognize this fact? It seems clear that the failure to comprehend the dynamic aspects of upland Southeast Asian peoples was largely the consequence of the ways in which western observers conceptualized human groups in general as well as the Southeast Asian peoples in particular. The observations of colonial administrators, missionaries, adventurers and anthropologists were filtered through a grid of western preconceptions, assumptions and expectations about "tribes," "social structures," "societies" and the like. These preconceptions effectively masked the processes of change which were a vital part of the upland peoples' social life. As a result the ethnographic map of Southeast Asia was "balkanized" at best, just as was the map of Europe, or at worst left a chaotic jigsaw puzzle to be accounted for by the seemingly aimless migrations of uplanders eddying around the more stable civilizations of the lowlands. The problem of understanding the upland peoples apparently does not lie so much in any peculiar propensity that they have for fluidity and change, but rather, in the failure of western observers to overcome the inherent limitations of their own preconceptions and assumptions. That is, the locus of the problem lies with the flaws of western theoretical and methodological preferences rather than in any intrinsic peculiarity of the upland peoples.

As Leach has shown for the Kachin, I am arguing that none of these various upland peoples now enshrined in the ethnographic tradition of Southeast Asia has (or had) any permanent and immutable ethnographic status. Rather, they are all undergoing continuous processes of change. Among the Kachin Leach has highlighted an "oscillatory" dimension of these processes of change, a dimension seemingly shared by many other upland peoples. However, we should also note that in the post-World War II era many of these groups, most notably the Kachin and the Naga, have deliberately sought to establish themselves as distinct and autonomous political entities; entities which do not coincide in any simple way with their traditional political forms. Perhaps it might be fruitful to investigate, as I have hypothesized above, that there is a process of "directional" change operating as well as an "oscillatory" one.

In highlighting the oscillatory process operative among the Kachin Leach not only laid bare a dimension of upland social life that had been missed by others, he also poses some serious questions about the adequacy of some of the most cherished concepts, assumptions and methodological strategies held by anthropologists. In concluding his Kachin study Leach (1954: 285) recommends that anthropologists should frankly recognize the "fictional" status of many of their assumptions, such as that of "equilibrium." It may well be that anthropology is and perhaps inevitably must be a species of "science-fiction," however, this recommendation of Leach's may not confront the major problem posed by the upland peoples. For one thing, as was suggested above, Leach's Kachin analysis does not so much bring the equilibrium assumptions of anthropology into question but broadens the range within which equilibrium systems are to be treated. For another, for anthropologists to simply accept the "fictional" quality of their concepts might actually have a pernicious effect. It might lead us to value the fictional side of our discipline over the scientific side. Surely, some fictions are closer to "real" life than others, and our task must be to seek these out in preference to those that are less so.

Subsequently, Leach (1963a) proposes a more drastic step, "rethinking" the theoretical and methodological bases of our discipline. While this proposal might pose serious conceptual difficulties, it might prove more efficacious than Leach's earlier proposal. For many years a great many anthropologists took their major task to be laying bare a single persisting "social structure" which formed the skeleton for a neatly bounded "society." In ingenious ways they showed the institutional

arrangements and structural-functional linkages which subordinated the individual to societal constraints, thereby encouraging the persistence of the social structure intact. This approach to anthropology took the discipline a long way beyond the founding fathers efforts to create universally valid evolutionary sequences in the development of human civilization. But the functionalist-social structuralist approach to anthropology can also be a mental straightjacket as well. It can (and has) lead to a neglect of the dynamic role of culture in the shaping of social activities, to a synchronic view of the world in which change is dealt with peripherally if at all, and one in which the role of the "person" as an active agent is virtually ignored.

Leach's Kachin study has helped to highlight some of these fundamental problems with conventional anthropological theory and has made its application to upland Southeast Asian peoples questionable if not obsolete. How then are we to approach the ethnographic map of Southeast Asia in a more meaningful and useful way? On the basis of the preceding discussion I would like to set out one possible line of attack.⁴¹

We might conceptualize the ethnographic situation of upland Southeast Asia in the following way. Although our sources indicate that considerable structural variability and differences in specific content are to be found among the peoples of the region, they can also be viewed as sharing a single generalized culture. In this context culture refers here to generalized patterns of values, symbols, ideas and other symbolic-meaningful systems which shape and control human behavior (see Kroeber and Parsons, 1959; Parsons, 1966). Each of the upland groups reported in the literature might then be seen as an "unbounded" social system in which the actors are playing out the internalized values and norms defined by this generalized culture. But, this culture does not define a *single* "society." Rather, it defines a *range* of social systems, and this range might be treated analytically as forming a single "type," e.g., "hill tribes society." The ethnographic map of Southeast Asia might then be viewed somewhat in kaleidoscope fashion, as combinations and permutations of specific socio-cultural elements as these social systems develop within the overall framework of the single generalized culture. Such a point of view would focus more specifically on cultural elements than on social structure, but it certainly need not ignore such factors. Indeed, as the previous discussion has indicated, cultural, social and psychological factors all need to be taken into account, and ecological and other factors as well. One conceptual device which might prove useful from this perspective is provided by the distinction Geertz (1957b) has drawn between the logico-meaningful integration of cultural systems and the causal-functional integration of social systems. The problem of maintaining some sort of stable balance or mesh between cultural and social elements even as they are internalized into the personalities of individual actors might be a useful way of approaching the upland peoples. Whether one prefers to view the relations between these factors as "dialectical" or as "cybernetic" might be a matter of personal theoretical preference, though one fraught with important implications.

Taking a more "cultural" perspective would allow us to expand the spatial dimension in which we view the peoples of upland Southeast Asia. But, we need to do more. We also need to expand our temporal dimension as well, to make our studies more "historical" as well as more "cultural." We can no longer rely on the narrow spatial and temporal boundaries which were characteristic of conventional functionalist-social structural anthropology. If we fail to expand these boundaries, we will surely overlook the very processes of continuous change which Leach was able to discern amongst the Kachin. A theory of socio-cultural evolution would provide one theoretical framework in which such broader spatial and temporal dimensions can be accommodated, though there are no doubt other possibilities as well. However, whatever cultural-historical scheme seems ultimately most fruitful, adopting any such perspective is likely to have extremely important methodological implications for the practicing anthropologist. For many years anthropologists have relied primarily on intensive field-work as the preferred anthropological method. But, this methodology is intimately linked to the assumptions of conventional functionalist-social structural anthropology. The field-work methodology may be poorly adapted to a theoretical perspective in which our spatial and temporal horizons have been expanded and our focus is on ranges of structural variability and processes of change.

In this essay I have attempted to extend Leach's insights on the Kachin to a number of other upland peoples in Southeast Asia. In doing so I have sometimes

41. See Lehman (1963, 1967a, 1967b), La Raw (1967) and Moerman (1965) who have approached this problem from somewhat different perspectives than that proposed here.

taken issue with a number of points that Leach raised in his study. The questions I have raised are mainly matters of theoretical perspective and should not be taken to indicate any disagreement with Leach's overall interpretation of the Kachin material. I see my own argument to be essentially identical to that of Leach. I have shifted my focus from "political" to "religious." But, I do not claim that because Leach focused on "political systems" that he was mistaken. Stevenson (1943) portrays the Chin as if they were "economic rational men." Leach pictures the Kachin as something of a cross between Machiavelli and Tammany politicians. This essay has presented the upland peoples as if they were some sort of religious fanatics. The question, as I see it, is not one of being right or wrong, but one of level of generality. Stevenson shows that, given the Chin system of cultural values, they behave in an economically rational manner. This is precisely what we might expect. Leach's emphasis on Kachin "political" processes is appropriate because they represent an extreme case in the range of variation included in "hill tribes society" where political problems are most important. The present analysis has focused on religious factors because, as I see it, it is in this cultural sphere that the most general values and norms are manifested. My concern has been with a number of groups, rather than any one in particular.

Victor Turner (1964: 314) has recently observed that:

the "facts" [studied by anthropologists] have changed within the last decade and theory must change with them. Anthropologists are still vitally concerned to exhibit "structures" of social relations, ideas, and values, but now tend to see these in relation to processes of which they are both the products and the regulators. Process theory involves a "becoming" as well as a "being" vocabulary, admits of plurality, disparity, conflict of groups, roles, ideals, and ideas, and since it is concerned with human beings, considers such variables as "goal," "motivation," "intention," "rationality," and "meaning."

Leach's study of the Kachin has been a prime mover in helping us to see and to understand the changing "facts."

APPENDIX

Table 1.A AUTOCRATIC	Gumsa Kachin	Sema Naga	Zahau Chin	West Rengma	Upper Lamet	Lhota Naga
Marriage system	prescriptive, affines and reputation	probable prescriptive, supernatural sanctions	probable prescriptive, supernatural sanctions	possible preferential, MoBro controls fertility	probable preferential, affines control fertility	probable preferential, affines duties in FM
Bride-price	variable (high)	variable (high)	variable (high)	variable (high)	variable; bride-service	?; bride-service
Class-endogamy	indicated	indicated	indicated	indicated	indicated	arranged marriages
Lineage size	long genealogies, clan ideology	long genealogies	not indicated	greater than East R.	not indicated, possible change (young to Siam)	lineages split w/ status impl. & forget genealogical links
Polygamy	present	present	present (rare)	almost unknown	not indicated	frequent; parents, women initiate.
Divorce	"ordinary Kachin" no, Gauri do recognize	frequent, easy, (for "commoners"?)	more frequent than for "democratic"	common in NW branch rare in SW branch	not indicated	frequent; women initiate
Sex permissiveness	young ("commoners"?) have great freedom	chaste, less free than other Nagas	less free than "democratic"	varies from vill. to vill. strictest in SW branch	present	varies from village to village
Adoption, Bond-slavery	adoption ? formerly present	adopt son-in-law, very important	adoption present, very important	less than Sema, but rich men adopt debtors	only mention adoption of children	almost unknown (few so poor as to be willing)
Inheritance, Succession	ultimogeniture (paired w/eldest brother) indicates complexity	eldest "colonizes," youngest "residual" heir, indicates complexity	primogeniture (paired w/youngest brother) indicates complexity	youngest gets house, land inherited equally	information limited, priest hereditary, but elected by men of village	take into account if bride-price was paid
Property, tenure boundaries	not clear, British boundaries stabilize status relations	chief controls alloc. of land, "nobles" may have own "serfs" land	chief allocates land; may inherit only one plot in block	considerable clan land, allocate by agreement of clansmen	definite village boundaries	rarely find boundaries, clan portions land, seniors get best
Community house	not present	almost non-existent, chief's house serves	not indicated	present, in poor condition (mission influence?)	present, probably less important than Lower Lamet	important, rebuild every nine years
Oaths, litigation	not indicated; factionalism, competition	chief's good, others not; less than other Naga	not indicated; not clear	respected (posse change); bickering (colonial influence)	not indicated; indicated	highly regarded; much bickering
Feasts	feasts like FM, related to social mobility; chief has exclusive feasting rights	present, possibly low frequency; FM links w/other villages	FM link w/heaven, production, mobility; possible small size, change in freq. due to colonial situation	FM present, high motiv. but probably low frequency	v/important, linked w/production and prestige; possibly less freq. than Lower Lamet	v/important, frequency probably low

Table 1.B DEMOCRATIC	Gumlao Kachin	Angami Naga	Zanniat Chin	East Rengma	Lower Lamet	Ao Naga
Marriage system	prescriptive (?), affines & reputation	possible preferential, groom's group inferior	probably preferential, supernatural sanctions	possible preferential, MoBro controls fertility	probable preferential, affines control fertility	probable preferential; affines have FM duties
Bride-price	low	nominal for most	very low	low	variable; bride-service	low
Class-endogamy	not present	not indicated	not indicated	arranged marriage	less restricted than Upper Lamet	not indicated
Lineage size	fragment rapid, shallow, no clan ideology	rapid fragment, (esp. Eastern branch)	not indicated	shallow	rapid fragmentation	probable shallow
Polygamy	not indicated	monogamy, serial wives	frowned on	fairly common	not indicated	serial wives
Divorce	not indicated	easy, women initiate	less than "autocratic"	common	not indicated	v/common; women initiate
Sex permissiveness	young have great freedom	great deal of liberty	freest in "democratic" group	girls admit lovers	present	very great freedom
Adoption, Bond-slavery	probably not present	objectionable, rare	possibly rare	less common than West Rengma	only mention adoption of children	rare (wealth wedl distr.) formerly slaves present
Inheritance, Succession	not indicated (equal?) (primogeniture?)	divide as sons marry, eldest son treated specially	primogeniture (paired w/youngest); some primogeniture, indicates complexity	son marries, Fa. and rest move to new house, land inherited equally	information limited, (priest hereditary, but elected by men of village)	all sons inherit equally
Property, tenure boundaries	not indicated	terraces; may be no demarcation, get land by clan agreement or "grab"	inherit any number of farm plots in block	terraces, right to land vested in founding lineages	no definite village limits, farm where wish	formerly land rights vested in founding lineage, rights through clearing
Community house	not present	insignificant, ordinary house may perform function	not indicated	important	present, probably more important than Upper Lamet	very important
Oaths, limitation	not indicated	very reliable; very litigious	not indicated; possibly more than "autocratic"	v/respected; few cases, settled in village	not indicated	important; "vilely" litigious
Feasts	feasts like FM, related to mobility, no exclusive feasting rights	high motivation, link w/heaven, frequent links w/distant villages	feasts linked w/heaven, production, mobility; possible larger than "autocratic," change in frequency due to colonial influence; <i>Pau Chin Hau</i> cult	as keen re FM as West, probable greater size and frequency than West Rengma	v/important, linked w/production and prestige, possibly more frequent than Upper Lamet	v/important; may "adopt" another village for feasting, feast distinguished strangers in village, friends from other villages play important role in FM

NOTE ON TABLE 1

In classifying the various elements in this table, it was assumed that these societies were both highly unstable and/or constantly changing. The ethnography seems to have borne out this assumption. In some cases, the direction of the changes was relatively clear, e.g., the West Rengma appear to have been changing from a "more autocratic" to a "less autocratic" system. In other cases, the direction of the change is less clear. At least some of the apparent inconsistencies in the data, in terms of the model proposed in this paper, can be explained by differences in "stage of development." Factors of external contacts, adaptation to particular local conditions, and historical "accidents" certainly play their part in increasing the ethnographic complexity. These latter factors are largely ignored in this paper. The aim of this paper is to *reduce* the complexity of the ethnographic data to manageable proportions. Other analysts might make different decisions in classifying the same elements. They are invited to do so. This paper does not claim to exhaust the ethnography nor to be definitive. It is aimed at being suggestive. The pattern I discern seems fairly straightforward. Likely it will not seem so to others.

Marriage system

Two types of marriage "rule" are distinguished: (1) "prescriptive" matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, and (2) "preferential" matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. The discussion in the text suggests that these "rules" function differently under conditions of a large number of units in the system (i.e., "democratic" situations) and conditions of a small number of units in the system (i.e., "autocratic" situations). In one case, that of the Kachin, the ethnographer has classified the marriage rule for me. For the other groups, two qualifiers have been added in classifying the marriage rule: (a) *probable*, used when the ethnography strongly suggests the existence of the rule, (b) *possible*, used when the evidence is more ambiguous. Note Leach's point that the "prescriptive" rule applies primarily to persons of high status (1954: 77), and the point made in the body of this paper that the functioning of the marriage "rule" does not necessarily entail the development of a kinship terminology consistent with matrilineal cross-cousin marriage under conditions specified in the text (although the existence of such a terminology is taken as presumptive evidence of the existence of the marriage "rule"). In this category, I have also indicated whether there is any suggestion of a link between affines and "fertility," "reputation," the feasting system, or supernatural sanctions.

The qualifiers *probable* and *possible* are retained in the table with the same meanings as applied here. The term *not indicated* is generally used if there is no definite clue to be found in the ethnography of the existence (or non-existence) of such factor. A *question mark* (?) is used to indicate a highly tentative classification, a suggestion, or, in the case of Lhota bride-price, an absolute figure given in the ethnography rather than a comparative one.

Bride-price

In most cases the ethnographers have indicated that bride-prices are either low or exhibit a range, with some bride-prices fixed quite high and determined by status factors. The major exception to this is the Lhota Naga (Mills, 1922: 155). The presence of bride-service might be taken to indicate an "over-extended" ritual economy, implying that status differences are becoming well developed. On the other hand, bride-service also functions to "test" whether the couple's motivations are well matched.

Class endogamy

The presence of such a pattern is relatively unambiguous, although its absence is not always clear. "Class endogamy" presumably is absent in "highly democratic" groups since there are no "classes." The presence of a pattern of "arranged" marriage suggests that status differences are already developed and are taken into account in structuring affinal relations. The conditions of the economy and of the society which inhibit stable accumulations of "advantage," as well as those factors which favor such accumulation, should be kept in mind.

Lineage size

The presence of persons ("chiefs," "aristocrats," etc.) with long genealogies is taken as evidence of a "lineage" or a "clan" ideology. Following Leach (1954), I do not assume that these genealogies are "true," nor that "kinship" factors are equally important in the lives of all members of these groups. In "autocratic" groups, "lineages" and "clan" considerations are considerably more important for "chiefs" and "aristocrats" than for "commoners." In "democratic" groups, "lineage" and "clan" factors might be taken as of "equal" (but minimal) importance for all. In "democratic" groups, kinship factors appear to be subordinated to ritual autonomy.

Polygamy and divorce

These two factors are included in the table to serve as possible indices of the complexity of the ritual economy. Polygamy might be taken to imply the development of status differences. Reports of a high degree of polygamy may be indicative of a "middle-range" development of the ritual economy. Polygamy might be expected to be relatively rare at either the extreme of "pure democratic" development or of extreme "autocracy." In the former case, we would expect polygamy to be rare because status and wealth are relatively evenly distributed throughout the group. In the latter case, we would expect polygamy to be rare because "routinization" of motivation tends to equalize status differences. High rates of divorce might be taken to reflect the importance of personal qualities as opposed to the importance of qualities ascribed to groups. We would expect high rates of divorce in situations where there is considerable fluctuation of status, i.e., "democratic" groups generally and "autocratic" groups where accumulations of lineage "advantage" are unstable. Note also the different implications of divorce initiated by women and initiated by men.

Sex permissiveness

This classification is relatively unambiguous. Unfortunately some ethnographers, while indicating the presence of permissiveness, do not indicate its (possible) differential distribution among status groups. Sex permissiveness is sometimes reported as varying from village to village ("in a curious way"), e.g., West Rengma, Lhota. This might be taken to show intra-group differences in development of the ritual economy.

Adoption and bond-slavery

These classifications are relatively clear in the ethnography. The qualifier *formerly* (present) generally indicates that "slavery" existed prior to the colonial situation and was done away with through administrative pressure. See the text for comments on the differing implications of "adoption" and "bond-slavery" for ritual status advance.

Inheritance and succession

The "rules" reported by the ethnographers are in some cases so complex and unwieldy that the classification in the table can be taken only as gross approximations, and frequently suggests that the ethnographers may have misconstrued the native criteria. This paper suggests one possible way to bring order out of this complexity.

Property, boundaries, tenure

The ethnographic evidence is not particularly clear nor consistently reported. The classification offered here and the discussion in the body of the paper are meant to be suggestive. This area needs more detailed investigation.

Community houses

The classification provided here is relatively clear from the ethnography. See the text for a discussion of the possible functions of the "community house."

Oaths and litigation

These factors are not consistently reported, since they tend to be of particular interest to those ethnographers who were also concerned with colonial administration. Possibly other factors might be used as indices of "personal integrity" and disputes over ritual rights and status.

Feasts

The relative importance of the feasting complex for motivation in production and status mobility seems fairly clear. Some indication of factors used to classify relative size and frequency of feasts is given in the body of the paper. The table also indicates the presence of feasting links between villages where reported. These links might be taken to show the role which the feasting complex plays in integrating areas larger than a single village. From the structure of feasting, particularly the special roles which affines play, we might suggest that the feasting complex serves to integrate the area within which inter-marriage takes place. We would expect that such feasting links would be more characteristic of "middle-range" and "elaborated" ritual economies than of "simple" (i.e., "pure democratic") ritual economies.

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