

R. H. BARNES: *Kédang: a study of the collective thought of an eastern Indonesian people.* (Oxford Monographs on Social Anthropology.) xviii, 350 pp., front., 4 plates. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. £7.

Eastern Indonesia is distinguished by the incidence of societies traditionally possessing systems of asymmetric prescriptive alliance and clearly marked conceptual dualism, which have remained relatively unappreciated as, until recently, the material was mostly available only in Dutch. On Lembata to the east of Flores, selected for its isolation and the lack of previous research there, Dr Barnes studied the Kédangese, a small society of some 25,000 people, culturally and linguistically distinct from their neighbours, who retain *many* features of their original social system despite substantial changes and partial conversion to Islam and Christianity. The result is a competent and modestly presented description of the structures of thought and alliance of an almost unknown people, and a valuable contribution to the anthropological literature on the area, accessible to English-speaking scholars.

Within an ethnographic frame, the book aims to establish some of the principles underlying Kédangese thought, or collective representations, through a detailed examination of culture and terminology, and illustrates how these recur in the form in which social relations are conceived, as exemplified in village structure and alliance categories. The model as adumbrated seems to consist of opposed segments tending to cyclical closure, the articulation of which creates points of 'transition', and where motion occurs in the system it is irreversible and properly towards the right (although, to take an example, in the circulating connubium between clans, women and bridewealth necessarily flow in opposite directions). In the course of developing this theme, the author passes elliptically through a wide range of subjects, from house structure to rites of passage and clan relations, to show how these all conform to a 'total' conceptual order based on the ranking of complementary opposites.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book for the general reader is the discussion of asymmetric prescriptive alliance. Not only is a detailed exposition given of the ideal system and of relationship terminology, but this is also demonstrated to be congruent with the framework of collective thought. For instance, the circulation of women through the system, reflected in the different terminology used by females, is related to beliefs about the source of life and the dichotomy between the spiritual authority of wife-givers and the temporal power of the clan elders. There is an important chapter in which the author provides ethnographic data on marriage frequencies which indicate that substantial deviation from the norm occurs and that direct exchange and the formation of new alliances are not, in practice, uncommon. However, the account also supplies some evidence that the highly valued closed cycles, ideally involving only three exchanging clans, actually occur, and an analysis is made of bridewealth debt relations which, in one instance quoted, achieved a complete circuit on the day of settlement. By way of conclusion, the institutions commonly associated with prescriptive terminology are reappraised in the light of the material from Kédang, and it is argued that arranged marriage, the absence of divorce, and obligatory widow-inheritance are not necessary features of the system.

There are, however, minor shortcomings. The presentation of material and the chapter order make for heavy reading and call for frequent cross-reference. As a consequence, the discussion of subjects such as colour, ancestors or animal categories appears fragmented or incomplete, while systems like augury are referred to, but never fully examined. The analysis makes constant use of indigenous terms and synonyms, the translation or interpretation of which at times seems frankly speculative (see pp. 30-1, or pp. 105-6 for respective instances). Terminological parallels with other Indonesian languages are occasionally dubious—for example, on p. 86 *wajan* (according to the standardized spelling *wayan*: the side of the roof facing uphill) is tentatively

equated with the Balinese *wayang* (shadow-play, -puppet, or possibly ancestor), although the homonym *wayan* (from *wayah-an* ‘older, maturer’) is closer. Finally, it would have been far easier to follow the argument if the maps were more comprehensive, especially as detailed references are not easily available elsewhere. None the less, as a whole, the monograph provides an outstanding account of Kédangese thought and an illustration of the fruitful use of a ‘structuralist’ approach. In particular, the sections in which statistical material is contraposed to the formal schema are impressive, and it is to be hoped that, at some later date, the author will find occasion to produce an equally detailed study of the social organization of Kédang.

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