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The path of marriage Journeys and transformation in Manggarai, eastern Indonesia

Marriage and alliance have been central topics in eastern Indonesian ethnography since the publication in 1935 of Van Wouden's comparative study of social structure in the region.¹ As a member of the Dutch Leiden School, Van Wouden sought to uncover the basic patterns of social organization and classification that defined eastern Indonesia as a 'field of study'. In particular, he aimed to demonstrate the importance to these societies of 'connubium' (forms of cross-cousin marriage), arguing that marriage customs were the 'pivot' to a comprehensive organization of society and cosmos (Van Wouden 1968:2). Since this pioneering study, ethnographers have continued to reveal a variety of types of marriage alliance in the region, whilst retaining a distinctive Leiden School stress on cosmology and classification.² However, whilst these and other works have considered important and complex issues in relation to eastern Indonesian marriage, they have tended to be most concerned with the 'rules' governing social action, and with demonstrating the links between cosmological beliefs, ritual activities, and structural order.

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² See, for example, Barnes 1974, Fox 1980, Traube 1986, Lewis 1988, McKinnon 1991, Forth 2001.

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By contrast with the Leiden-derived tradition of analysis, this article considers the topic of marriage from a new angle.³ In particular, I describe people's personal experiences of the marriage process, in order to show how relations of marriage can be understood not simply as a set of rules and classifications, but as a sequence of place-based, practical actions. My focus for this discussion is the region of southern Manggarai, in the west of the Indonesian island of Flores, where people often speak of marriage as a 'path' (*halang*). For example, a proposed marriage with a previously unconnected family is described as a 'new path', whilst those wishing a girl to marry her father's sister's son will hope she 'follows the path of her aunt'. Are such descriptions merely metaphorical, creating an image similar to the lines of anthropology's kinship diagrams? Or might there be a more literal connection between marriage paths and the 'real', muddy trails through mountain forests and along lowland rice-fields?

Interestingly, Fox's influential introduction (1980) to *The flow of life* notes the description of affinal relationships as 'paths' amongst several eastern Indonesian societies. Indeed, given the widespread use of the title of this volume as a description of marriage in these societies, it is worth noting that it could just as easily have been called 'the path of life'. Here and elsewhere in the literature, we find Kodinese 'paths' (*lara*) of exchange goods (Needham 1980a:37), Mambai 'paths' (*dan*) blazed by ancestral marriages (Traube 1986:81), old Anakalangese alliances that are a 'smooth path [*lara*], worn down trail' (Keane 1997:54) and the characterization of an Atoni mother's brother's daughter as the 'woman of the path' (*fe lalan*) (Schulte Nordholt 1980:235). Other writers also speak more generally of alliance paths (Barnes 1974:240; Forth 2001:104-5) or pathways (McKinnon 1991:124), or note the 'movement' involved in the relationship between alliance groups (Barraud 1990:214). These works are primarily (and justifiably) concerned with metaphoric representations rather than the active movement involved in marriage relations. Whilst, in a later edited collection on Austronesian ideas about place, Fox calls for a comparative study of 'pathways', he also envisages them primarily as 'an active *mode of representation* of relations and their transformation'.⁴ By contrast, this article shows how connections of marriage between different houses and villages are not simply 'represented' by the paths criss-crossing the Manggarai landscape, but

³ I am not the first to feel the limitations of this tradition, and am influenced by both Hoskins's work (1998) on the nuances of individual biographies, and Keane's understanding (1997) of the 'dilemmas' of representation involved in ritual practice on Sumba.

⁴ Fox 1997:17, my emphasis. In the same volume, McWilliam (1997) analyses paths as a 'relationship idiom' among the Meto of West Timor. Significantly, the notion of marriage paths or 'roads' also appears to be widespread in Melanesia (Bonnemaison 1985:46; Parmentier 1987:109; O'Hanlon and Frankland 2003:168).

are in a very real way experienced as travel along these paths.⁵

In outlining the significance of marriage as a series of journeys along paths, this article also adds to an emerging anthropological literature on place and landscape (Hirsch 1995; Bender 1993). Particularly significant to the issues addressed here are ethnographic descriptions, most notably of Australian Aborigines, stressing the links between place and kinship. Myers (1986:128), for example, has described the Pintupi conception of 'country' as 'the objectification of kin networks and [...] a record of social ties', in which landscape mediates between the present and the ancestral past. For Southeast Asian societies, connections between place and kinship have been most notably stressed in terms of the 'house-based' nature of social life (Errington 1989:207-8). Certainly, as this article briefly describes, houses and other dwellings are a key feature of the Manggarai landscape. Moreover, like other 'house-based' societies in eastern Indonesia (see, for example, McKinnon 1995), 'houses' in Manggarai are as much constituted by travel and pathways as they are by the everyday routines of dwelling. That is, houses and pathways continually interact, and are equally significant in creating a dynamic, contested landscape linking place, history and kinship.

The importance of focusing on movement as well as (more or less fixed) place has been particularly stressed by James Clifford (1997:3), who argues that in common assumptions about culture, dwelling is understood to be 'the local ground of collective life', whilst travel is conceived as a mere 'supplement'. Clifford's polemic is addressed to a discipline which has imagined fieldwork as a 'dwelling practice' rather than a 'travel practice', and he thus tends to play down the significance of those studies – from Malinowski's descriptions of kula trade to the literature on pilgrimage – that have focused on 'local' travel. Indeed, within the ethnography of Southeast Asia alone, Rosaldo (1980) has very persuasively shown how Ilongot kinship is fundamentally constituted by movement through the landscape. However, what I take to be most useful in Clifford's work (1997:36) is the tension or relationship that he identifies in any one society between routes and roots, calling for an examination of 'everyday practices of dwelling and traveling: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling'. In this article, I hope to go beyond such a vague expression and to show how journeys are very practically involved in the creation of Manggarai marriage connections, and of gendered identity through the life-cycle.

⁵ One issue of comparative interest that this article returns to is the question of links between paths and the more famous botanical idioms prevalent in eastern Indonesian talk about relatedness (Fox 1971; Sugishima 1994).

Dwelling and travelling in Manggarai

The Manggarai region has a long coastline, and an extremely mountainous central area, with a culturally and linguistically diverse population of some half a million. Subsistence cultivation remains the predominant economic activity, but people are also increasingly farming cash crops such as coffee and candlenut. The setting for my fieldwork was a southern Manggarai community who are split between a highland, origin village called Waé Rebo and a lowland, satellite village called Kombo (see Allerton 2001). Although this community calls itself 'the people who swing' (*ata jéjong*), various forms of fixed place are nevertheless central to people's sense of historical identity. Most important is the land (*tana*), with circular fields divided into communally owned ritual centres and wedge-shaped, patrilineally inherited gardens. The land is significant as a source of food but, particularly in the origin village, also has a protective 'energy' (*ghas*) connected with ancestral and other spirits. This energy is partly contained in old stone platforms on Waé Rebo's village yard, and is utilized during rituals of community renewal. Such rituals are also focused on the 'drum house' (*mbaru gendang*), a large communal dwelling that, like other Southeast Asian 'great Houses', unites a nominally patrilineal community (Errington 1989:238; Allerton 2003:121-2). However, more modest types of dwellings – from small garden huts to multi-family houses – are also central to notions of identity, health and relatedness. For example, if a person suffers illness or misfortune, a ritual is held to 'collect the soul' (*hilir wakar*) which may have wandered, by re-rooting that person's identity in their home. Significantly, these rituals are held in front of the 'room' (*kilo*) that is the focus for 'household' (*kilo*) reproduction.

When a baby is born in southern Manggarai, this household room becomes a kind of second womb, protecting the child in the weeks after the birth, a stick attached from the floor of the room to the place where the placenta has been buried in the ground below. This is the same stick that, in the hours immediately after the birth, is used to announce the child's gender. A man bangs with the stick on the side of the room and asks 'an outside person or an inside person?' If the baby is a boy, those inside the house will shout 'an inside person', whereas for a girl they shout 'an outside person'. These declarations of the future location of Manggarai children doubly express travel and fixity. Since they are destined at marriage to move away from their natal home, girls are 'outside people', the counterpart to their 'insider' brothers (McKinnon 1991:107; Sugishima 1994:154). However, there are some respects in which this pattern of gendered movement is an ideal form, not always matched by reality. Some men will move permanently away from their natal village, either to seek work or to settle and receive land in their wife's village. There are also a number of women who, for a variety of per-

sonal reasons, never marry, remaining instead in their natal homes, often to become heads of dispersed households, or weavers of great renown. Thus, the description of children as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' is to some extent contingent, dependent on later circumstances.

Framing this pattern of residence and movement is a division of one's social world into three main groups. These are *ahé-ka'é* or 'kin',⁶ and the two alliance categories of *woé* and *iné-amé*. The latter are best translated as, respectively, 'sister or daughter' and 'mother-father'. Although it is tempting, following most analyses of eastern Indonesian marriage systems, to translate these two categories as 'wife-takers' and 'wife-givers', I prefer to use glosses of the local terms. This is because, firstly, the conventional analytical terms lack the complex familial meanings of *woé* and *iné-amé*. As elsewhere on Flores, terming the partners in a marriage alliance 'sister/daughter' and 'mother-father' encodes their relationship as a kin-like connection between a female 'child' and a senior, generative couple (Barnes 1974:250-1; Sugishima 1994:152; Forth 2001:117). Secondly, the conventional terms exclude from membership the very women who move between groups after marriage. As feminist critics of Lévi-Strauss's conception of 'woman-exchange' have argued, women in such alliance systems are not simply the 'conduit of a relationship' (Rubin 1975:174), but are centrally involved in the imagination and practice of marriage alliance. As this article shows, Manggarai women are involved with and constitute the landscape of relatedness as much as men, and are recognized by men as doing so.

Perhaps the most important conception underlying ideas about marriage alliance is that *woé* and *iné-amé* should never be confused. A man should never marry a woman from a family into which one of his clan branch 'sisters', 'father's sisters' or 'grandfather's sisters' has married in the past. Manggarai people often express this by reference to the livestock that should pass from one group to the other, declaring that 'what is a pig is rightly a pig, what is a chicken is rightly a chicken' (*omé kina, kina muing; omé manuk, manuk muing*).⁷ Marriages that are perceived as reversing this 'flow' of life and goods are forbidden (*toé kop*). If the couple are determined to marry and the link between the two groups is rather distant, fines and a procedure of tracing other kinship links, called 'looking for a mother-father' (*kawé iné-amé*), may make the marriage possible. However, in other *toé kop* cases, couples who decide to live together will have no bridewealth and no marriage rituals, and may even be disowned by their families.

⁶ The literal translation of *ahé-ka'é* is 'younger same-sex sibling – older same-sex sibling'.

⁷ Chickens are always given by *woé* to their *iné-amé*, whilst the latter are associated with the pigs provided for both alliance and mortuary rituals. Compare Traube 1986:92.

Following or forging a marriage path

Manggarai people distinguish a number of different types of marriage, from 'kidnapping' (*roko*) to 'looking after orphans' (*tinu-lalo*) whereby a woman marries her sister's widower.⁸ However, the main contrast that people draw is between *sangkang* marriages that create a 'new path' of alliance, and a form of cross-cousin marriage called *tungku* or 'to join'. The pure form of *tungku* is marriage of a man with his mother's brother's daughter, often referred to as *tungku halang* or 'to join the path'. However, as in Anakalang on Sumba (Keane 1997:54), the broad definition of cross-cousins, together with the complex histories of marriage between different families, means that men and women always have a number of possible *tungku* partners. There are therefore a number of different paths that any one person could 'join' with a *tungku* marriage.

In Manggarai, marriage between couples with close genealogical links has been forbidden by the Catholic church. Nevertheless, despite this ban, and helped by occasional dispensations from the regional bishop, marriages described as *tungku* continue to be contracted, perhaps accounting for a fifth of all matches. This persistence can be explained by a number of factors. In the first place, people are seeking *tungku* links by tracing more distant alliance connections, often through a parent's same-sex sibling (known as *néténg nara*, 'each brother'). Secondly, and like other Austronesian peoples (Fox 1997:9), those in Manggarai place great importance on remembering origins to ensure health and success in life, saying they want their sons to contract *tungku* marriages because they are 'scared of forgetting our mother's path' (*rantang hémong halang de inê*). However, perhaps the most important reason for the persistence of *tungku*, and one rarely noted in the eastern Indonesian literature where preference for MBD marriage may be seen as 'almost solely ideological' (Barnes 1980:84), is the currents of mutual attraction running between potential *tungku* partners. From early childhood, they will be teased about playing with their 'husband' or 'wife', and as they grow up, their relationship is one framed by the possibility of marriage. Just as cross-cousin marriage is a 'romantic ideal' in southern India (Trawick 1992:151), so, under the right circumstances, Manggarai *tungku* partners are thought to be irresistible to one another.

As noted, such marriages are conceived as following the path of the father's sister or other female relative who went before, whilst marriages that create a new connection are thought to forge a fresh path of relatedness. Although there

⁸ For more on marriage and relationship terminologies in central and eastern Manggarai, see Coolhaas 1942; Van Bekkum 1944; Verheijen 1967; Gordon 1980; Erb 1991. Needham (1966, 1980b) and Hicks (1984) have, through analyses of secondary sources, debated the theoretical existence and 'evolution' of a prescriptive alliance system in Manggarai, showing a peculiar disregard for both detailed ethnographic description, and the complex realities of individual lives.

are many similarities between the practices constituting such marriages, there are also inevitable differences in experience between old and new pathways that I shall return to. For now, I want to briefly outline how Manggarai marriages are initiated and created, whilst again noting that the process sketched here is something of an ideal-type that some marriages will subvert.

Marriage proposals, which were once made formally to the *iné-amé* by a spokesperson or 'bridge', are today usually made via a letter from the young man to his prospective bride. If she accepts this proposal, both sides will meet in the young woman's house and the couple will exchange rings. The bride may also receive a number of gifts, and the date will be set for the *kémpu*, the ritual at which the bridewealth (*bélis*) is negotiated. The *kémpu* consists of rather drunken and protracted negotiations; after this the previously hidden bride is 'accompanied' (*karong*) into the front room of the house, where she and her prospective husband sit together slightly awkwardly on the main guest mats. There is then likely to be a wait of between six months and a year before the church wedding and final marriage ritual (*wagal*). During this time, the couple will pay numerous visits to the church, in particular to attend a marriage course, in which they are given religious instruction and taught the basics of 'Christian family life'.

The church wedding itself is often a lengthy affair, with a large number of couples married by the priest in one go. After the ceremony, the bride and groom proceed back to the house of the *iné-amé*, where coffee and cakes are served and villagers come to shake hands with the newly married pair, and cry with the bride. Later, after a short wait, the *wagal* is held, a large-scale event involving further financial negotiations, ritual speeches, and meals of specially killed pig. The *wagal* ends with the departure of the bride on the *padong*, her first journey to her husband's home, in which she is accompanied by numerous friends and relatives. At the end of the *padong*, the bride is met by a party of gong-banging women, come to 'greet the young girl' (*suru molas*). She then 'treads on an egg' (*wegi ruha*) held in special leaves at the entrance to the groom's home. Later that evening, after they have been greeted by villagers, the couple's new status is finally marked by a ritual called 'blood on feet' (*dara wa'i*). Those who have accompanied the bride will usually leave the next morning, and she will begin her new life as a member of her husband's clan and household.

Spatial 'symbolism' and marriage practices

The events outlined above could be called the bare skeleton of Manggarai marriage. What fleshes this skeleton out are journeys, ritual actions, displays of tears and laughter and, in particular, numerous images of place and move-

ment. Marriage events, gifts, and negotiations are spoken of variously as 'climbing houses', 'treading over thresholds', 'entering', 'bridging water', 'opening doors', and 'sheltering'. Such spatial symbolism is common to eastern Indonesian marriage (McKinnon 1991:137; McWilliam 1997:113; Keane 1997:189) and, in Manggarai, combines images of both dwelling and movement, particularly through the idea of the threshold. Thus, men described their initial approach to their wife's family as 'climbing the house' (*tuké mbaru*), reporting back its acceptance with the ritual phrase 'The door is stepped over, the mat is spread'. Later, when the *woé* return for the *kémpu* negotiations, they might say to the bride's family 'Your door is going north to our village, and our door is coming here to your village'. In such phrases, and in line with Van Gennepe's analysis (1977) of the symbolism of thresholds in rites of passage, the coming together of doors illustrates the union of two worlds, in which all boundaries have been reduced.

The spatial symbolism of ritual speech is echoed in the names of various textiles presented by the *iné-amé* to the *woé*, in exchange for cash. A 'sarong to place' (*lipa peher*), a 'sarong to accompany' (*lipa padong*), and a 'sarong to shelter' (*lipa mbau*) might all be given at the *wagal* to ensure the bride's protection in her new home. Indeed, these crucial motifs of 'sheltering' and 'accompanying' are particularly stressed in the *karong* that takes place at both *kémpu* and *wagal* rituals, when the bride is brought through from the back to the front of the house. The *karong* is an example of the kinds of 'ransoms' that Van Gennepe (1977:119) saw as a frequent feature of marriage rites, and it is significant that what seems to be held to ransom is the bride's free passage from her natal kin to the *woé*. At the *karong* of Edis, a young Waé Rebo woman, the bride had an open umbrella⁹ held over her by a small group of female kin as they took her into the front room, filled with the smoke and conversation of male guests. Once in the front room of the house, Edis sat with her husband on a newly woven 'mat to accompany' (*losé karong*), with the women grouped around her. There then followed a negotiation over the amount of 'money to accompany' (*séng karong*) that the women should receive from the *woé*. It is not until this money has been paid that the women can return to the back of the house, having safely handed over the bride. Since it is normally men who negotiate and handle money at alliance events, the demands of these accompanying women are viewed rather humorously. The women themselves often play up to this, eschewing the formulaic language of negotiation, nonchalantly asking for extra cash as they spit out red betel juice between the cracks in the floor. At one *wagal*, a woman rejected the first amount of money

⁹ The use of umbrellas in these rituals is considered extremely important, perhaps because they are mobile shelters, thus neatly combining the dual characteristics of protective place and dynamic movement.

that she was offered with the blunt phrase *toé dod*, 'it's not much'. This was met with hoots of derisory laughter from the young men in the room, who shouted 'it's enough, mother!' (*emog, endé taaaa!*). Nevertheless, she refused to budge, and soon received all the money she had requested.

What are we to make of such ransomed journeys within rituals, or sarongs that 'place' and 'accompany' brides, or talk about climbing houses and treading on thresholds? And how can these examples, employing images of place and movement, help us to understand the way Manggarai people conceive of marriage as a 'path'? By concentrating on the rich language of ritual speech, or the names of textiles, one might be tempted to see these images in a wholly symbolic light. Indeed, Manggarai people themselves take great delight in uncovering the meaning of what they call the *bundu*, or riddles, of ritual speech. However, despite this, there is an additional element at stake with regard to marriage events. For example, the spokesman who reports back that 'The door is stepped over, the mat is spread' is using these simple images of house-visiting as a metaphor for acceptance by the bride's family. Yet, at the same time, he is also describing actions that he has performed. And in many ways it is possible to see the process of Manggarai marriage as the performance of a series of bodily practices involving place – rooms, houses, churches – and travel between places. If we concentrate on these practices, we can begin to understand the significance of referring to marriage as a 'path'.

When I first started to think about paths in Manggarai, I carried in my mind an image of the muddy trails that I had walked on, from highlands to lowlands, from house to washing spring, from village yard to field. If you travel frequently along certain paths, your body gets to know them well, anticipating a sudden dip, grasping with feet for roots to grip on, knowing that you are coming round a corner to a viewpoint. But, of course, these paths do not pre-exist in the landscape. Rather, it is in the very process of travel, pounding the ground with bare feet, that paths are made. This is particularly noticeable when walking along paths through the forest, as men cut back new plant growth with machetes, or women clear fallen branches and prickly leaves from the trail. However, even the stone roads in the lowlands, that have brought new trucks between southern villages and the town, are by no means permanent. Owing to the high levels of rainfall in Manggarai, they are periodically washed away, and these sections need to be rebuilt by those wishing to travel.

Just as the marriage process involves a series of practical actions, so too are paths made by action, by people travelling along them. Thus, the journeys that are central to Manggarai marriage actually blur the boundaries between 'real' and 'metaphorical' paths. My argument here is much stronger than those who see eastern Indonesian marriage paths as simply an 'image' or 'reflection' of real paths (McWilliam 1997:111, 114), and explains why, when walking to

other villages, Manggarai people will point to forks in the trail that lead to 'Wihei's path' or 'Kata's path'. The action of travel creates both a physical trail and an alliance relationship: the two are fundamentally entwined. Moreover, just as a forgotten forest trail becomes overgrown and impassable, so too can alliance paths become neglected, when people no longer travel to renew the connections between families.

To consider these complex marriage paths in more detail, this article now turns to the most significant marriage journey – the bride's *padong* to her new home. I focus on married women's *padong* recollections, and on the emotional intensity experienced by those on a *padong* journey. As mentioned earlier, the traditional literature on eastern Indonesian marriage has tended to focus on marriage categories as a pivot to classification (Van Wouden 1968), or on describing the ritual speech idioms that surround alliance relationships (Fox 1971). However, there has been little attention paid in such literature to how people talk in a non-rule-like way, or how they relate their own experiences. Including such accounts here is crucial if one is to give a more nuanced account of the marriage process, and if one is to include the voices of women and young people as well as male ritual 'specialists'.

The padong

The Manggarai word *padong* can be literally translated as 'to lead by the hand', and is overwhelmingly used to describe the accompanying of the bride to her new home. *Padong* journeys may be long or short, they may involve transferring possessions from one village house to another, walking for miles through forest, or taking a cramped and bumpy ride in a wooden passenger truck. The bride is accompanied by young friends, siblings and older relatives, all of whom receive a small amount of 'money for accompanying' (*séng padong*) from the *woé*. Fathers will often accompany their daughters, but mothers, even for a *padong* within the village, should always stay behind. I was prompted to consider the significance of this journey after interviewing a number of older, married women, all of whom gave it a central place in their life stories. In addition, the cultural salience of the *padong* is shown in rituals for the construction of the large clan building known as a 'drum house'. When the central house-post of this building is carried into the village, it is referred to as a kidnapped 'mountain bride' (*molas poso*), and is 'met' (*suru*) in the same way that a human bride would be after her *padong*.¹⁰

¹⁰ This ritual can be compared with Himalayan India, where the annual pilgrimage of a goddess represents a stylized version of a woman's postmarital journey (Sax 1991:14).

Padong journeys are marked by emotional leave-taking, and by the crying of the bride and her natal kin. Indeed, the bride's wailing – which also occurs after the church wedding and when she is left behind in her new home – is considered a central motif of the marriage process. This crying, common throughout Indonesia (Rodgers 1990:328-9), has a song-like quality to it, a rising and falling refrain of 'Oh, mother, eh...', echoing the ritual crying of women after a death. On the day of a bride's departure, the sound of her crying affects the mood of the whole village. Female relatives may lament how far away the new village is, or talk of other women who have moved away from their house. Women also reflect on their own *padong* journeys. One young mother, prompted by a bride's wailing, confided that when she left her own home village she had thought, 'When I die, where will my mother and father be? Not on the same land as me.' During interviews with older women about their lives and marriages, they all dwelt, with both laughter and sadness, on their crying. For example, Iné Kris¹¹ told me about her *padong*:

Oh dear, I really cried! Until I got to the hill down there [she describes exactly where the hill is]. And that was where I stopped crying. Ai, because until then I could still see the village to the west [I say, 'You loved your village?']. Yes, I had forgotten to eat with my father, that was why I cried.

Iné Kris's distress at forgetting to eat with her father is typical of these *padong* stories. Feeding people and eating together are crucial means of constituting closeness in Manggarai, and not eating implies emotional upset. Moreover, autobiographical memories in Manggarai are not structured by objects or domestic animals (Hoskins 1998) but by the eating of food and shedding of tears. Iné Kris went on to describe how she felt at the *padong* of her own daughter, Min. Although Min had married within the same village, Iné Kris still felt sad that they would no longer eat together, as one 'room' (*kilo*) or household:

The reason why I cried, it was because she was going from eating all together with us, struggling and chaotic [*rimi-remat*], and after that, I would be alone, that was why [I ask, 'But she was still in the same village?']. Yes, she was in the same village, but she had changed her room. Eh. Changed her room [she describes how she came back from the house where the wedding was taking place and cried]. I felt as if she had married into a village far away. And starting with lunch, I couldn't eat.

The crying of the bride and of her relatives could, of course, be seen simply as a cultural convention, rather than a sign of real emotional distress. However,

¹¹ This article follows the respectful form of address in southern Manggarai, whereby the name of an older woman with children is always prefixed with 'Mother' (*Iné*).

it is worth noting that some brides, despite feeling great sadness, do not cry at their *padong*. Older women in particular, who tend to be rather scathing about what they see as the excessive crying of contemporary brides, may believe that crying places one in spiritual danger. Several told me that they had been given 'medicine' at their *padong* so that, in spite of their emotions, they could not cry. At one *padong* I attended, the bride did not cry publicly, but was later heard weeping in a more private room. Significantly, a bride's post-*padong* sadness is often experienced as a longing for the 'land' – village, fields and general environment – of her natal home. Indeed, travelling a long marriage path dramatically transforms the landscape of a woman's daily life. Iné Aga, a woman in her sixties, told me:

Eh, child, I was sad after my *padong*. My thoughts were sad, if I looked to the side and around me [she pauses]. Well, everywhere [in this new village] there were mountains! But when I lived in the west, we were open to the sky above. In the lowlands. If I looked to the south [in my natal village], there was the sea, and if I looked to the west, I could see all the villages to the west [she describes a particular village in the west, and I say, 'But here, all mountains']. But here, just mountains. 'Oh,' I said then, 'I would run away, if I could see the path'.

Although people feel great sadness as a bride leaves on her *padong*, marriage events also have a rather contrasting emotional tenor – one focused on the children or 'growth' (*beka*) that the couple's sexual relationship will produce. Indeed, amongst the young people accompanying a bride on her *padong*, the sexually charged atmosphere is something to be revelled in, and the drunken teasing indulged in by young men is, in particular, in sharp contrast to female tears. As one bride's *padong* party departed from her new village, a crowd of young men gathered to raucously laugh at the young women's crying. Grooms themselves may occasionally join in this laughter, although their bride's sadness often leads them to shed a tear, to the merciless delight of their friends.

The presence of large parties of unmarried young people, often visiting a village for the first time, means that *padong* have always provided an excellent opportunity for meeting a potential spouse. One woman recalled attending her sister's *padong* in the 1970s:

We went to accompany Anna in the past, accompany her west to Wiko. When we arrived there, all these men came! They came to look at you! You couldn't go alone to go outside [to the toilet]. That's what men from Lembor¹² are like [she laughs]. If it is the first time they have seen you, that's what it is like. They all flap their hands! Ai, they really look, ooh! Some of them come, and they really disturb you

¹² Lembor is a region of western Manggarai well known for its grassy plains where livestock are grazed.

by sitting with you! [she laughs] [I ask, 'So are people here different, they don't do that?'] People here are different [she pauses]. Maybe they look here, but they are not really staring. These people to the west, they do it until they just eat you!¹³

Today, this atmosphere of excited flirting is particularly seen as people walk along together, or squeeze next to each other on trucks, and on occasions when a tape-player is found and an impromptu party takes place.

I have quoted a few *padong* stories to show the emotional significance of the bride's move away from home. This journey marks the final transformation in a bride's status, and is a key reason why Manggarai people refer to marriage as a 'path'. Indeed, like a pilgrim journeying to a sacred site, it is in the very process of travel, framed by departure and arrival, that the bride is transformed.¹⁴ At the end of the *padong*, the 'blood on feet' ritual literally marks the young woman's new status, as she is incorporated into those who her natal kin refer to as their *woé*. She must now relate to her natal kin not only as close relatives, who she may return to if her husband dies before the couple have children, but also as *iné-amé* who are owed appropriate gifts and respect.

Old and new pathways

Although the *padong* is one of the defining features of the 'path' of Manggarai marriage, it is important to consider how a bride's initial experience of married life is profoundly influenced by the type of path she travels. In Manggarai, a relatively egalitarian place that does not classify people into 'commoners' or 'nobles', different types of marriage are not associated with upholding or undermining hierarchy as they are in the Tanimbar Islands (McKinnon 1991:17). However, it is certainly the case that *tungku* matches are particularly favoured by poorer families since they are less costly than 'new paths'. What is of greater significance is the fact that a woman travelling a new path of marriage faces many more unknowns in her husband's village, as compared with the bride whose marriage 'joins the path' of a father's sister or other female relative.

For a *tungku* bride, the trauma of the *padong* may be quickly forgotten as she settles comfortably into the routines of a familiar house. Indeed, although the *padong* is ideally a woman's first bridal journey, many of those embarking on *tungku* marriages will have spent much of their childhood visiting their

¹³ To be 'eaten' by someone is also a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

¹⁴ '[T]here is a *rite de passage*, even an initiatory ritual character about pilgrimages' (Turner 1973:204).

'aunt' (*inang*), of whom they are usually extremely fond. For *tungku* or other forms of marriage within the same village, the bride faces an even easier transition period. One woman remarked that 'things are different if you marry within the village. It's the *wagal* of one community', adding that she hadn't cried because 'it's not as if I was far away'. However, for a bride forging a 'new path', the negotiation of new household arrangements, and of relations with her mother-in-law, may be rather more fraught. Ideally, a newly married couple should be incorporated into the husband's natal 'household/room' (*kilo*), sharing resources and labour with his parents. However, particularly in families with a number of sons, this kind of arrangement is often difficult to manage practically. Tensions frequently focus on if and when a new bride will start to 'eat separately' (*hang dion*) from her mother-in-law, whether in the same dwelling or in a new house built with the help of friends or siblings. Interestingly, a *tungku* bride is far more likely to 'eat together' (*hang sama*) with her mother-in-law. Sia, whose marriage was a 'new path', complained that her husband's elder brother's *tungku* wife was more accepted by the family, and acted rather snootily towards Sia, the 'outsider' bride.

The lack of familiarity that may make a 'new path' a source of tension is particularly pronounced in two forms of marriage involving a more rapid movement of the bride along her marriage path. These are *roko* or 'stealing' of the bride, and its modern equivalent, *wéndol* or 'running away'. *Roko*, which can be compared with other forms of 'marriage by capture' in eastern Indonesia (Barnes 1999:57-9), was a past practice involving the kidnapping of a girl, either because she could not be persuaded to marry the man in question, or because her family did not agree to the match. Although I never heard any reports of recent *roko* marriages, this practice still holds great imaginative sway over people's minds, and leads to endless rumours of *roko* kidnap, whether by humans or spirits. Whilst a *padong* bride knows she will be allowed to visit home some time after her arrival in her husband's village, *roko* brides are always portrayed as panicking after their arrival and running away. In one *roko* story told to me, it was significant that the unwilling bride only became 'calm' (*temer*) once her male relatives had found her hiding in their house, and taken her back to her husband in a more 'official' style.

By contrast with the violence of *roko* marriages, *wéndol* refers to a more recent type of marriage (growing in frequency throughout Manggarai) where the bride simply moves in with the man, either without the knowledge of her parents, or before the correct procedures have taken place. A *wéndol* marriage, which also carries the sense of a 'theft' of the bride, denies the normal marriage practices of slow house-climbing, protective 'accompanying', and processing. Whilst *padong* brides are 'led by the hand', people say of *wéndol* brides that they 'just went' (*dadé kaut*). During my fieldwork, a young woman called Sisi ran off with a man whilst attending the *wagal* of her brother Pius, shocking

her family who had only just become reconciled with Pius's own *wéndol* marriage. A month or so after this event, Sisi visited Kombo with her new husband and his family, presenting gifts to 'praise the patience' (*naring lembak*) of Sisi's father, and organizing a hurried *kémpu*. Significantly, Sisi began to cry loudly as soon as the truck drew up outside her parents' house. Unlike the bride who leaves on an official *padong*, the *wéndol* bride weeps not as she departs but as she returns, since she never officially 'left' in the first place.

These less 'official' marriage forms still indicate the significance of marriage as a series of journeys, since they are primarily described and experienced as overly hasty movement along a path, rather like pushing through the forest undergrowth without carefully cutting a trail.¹⁵ No matter how a marriage begins, the relationship it creates between *iné-amé* and *woé* should continue to be marked by journeys between their respective houses or villages. It is these journeys, as much as the emotionally intense *padong*, that lead those walking through the forest, or taking a truck up to town, to point out a particular woman's 'path' to their fellow travellers.

Other journeys along marriage paths

One of the first journeys in which a marriage path is retrodden, an alliance relationship remembered, is a woman's initial visit home after her *padong*. Such visits are both emotional reunions and a solidification of the woman's transformation into an out-married 'sister or daughter' (*woé*). Interestingly, when recalling return visits, many women dwelt on the kinds of foodstuffs they had taken back along their path to their parents. Thus, Iné Aga told me:

If we had harvested rice, we pounded it well, and took it to give to mother. It was always like that, if I went to the west. And if not, child [referring to me], [she pauses] if I was just going to visit, I took a chicken [slight pause]. Ehh, that was all that I took to do a good turn for the old people who had looked after me in the past. When mother was ill again, child, when she was near to death, I took that again. I took rice, child, I took a chicken, and I took dried meat.

In later years, probably after a number of children, women will make these visits less frequently. Iné Kata told me that after the death of her parents, she didn't travel back to her home village often, since 'If you don't have a mother and father... you aren't motivated to travel'. Instead, re-travelling a path to visit *iné-amé* becomes a more formal process, often undertaken by the

¹⁵ Similarly, amongst the Endenese of central Flores, a groom contracting a formal marriage walks along 'the neat road, the clean path', whilst a groom initiating an elopement 'slashes the grass to make way' (Nakagawa 1988:228-9).

woman's husband or sons. For example, when a man is preparing to marry, his family will make *sida* or 'requests for money' from their various *woé*. After a meeting to determine how much the *sida* should be, the groom's 'brothers' set out along the paths of these *woé*. Here, the landscape of social relations is seen in the webs formed by these journeys outwards from a centre along paths of alliance. Later, these webs are retraced as male representatives of the *woé* travel back along their path, bringing the *sida* money to a large ritual called *ongko* ('to heap or pile up').

Although travelling to an *ongko* responds to a formal request, men – whether travelling as *woé* or *iné-amé* – will also make more spontaneous, emotional journeys along marriage paths. I once walked with Talis and Odi, the parents of five children, to a village northwest of Waé Rebo. Talis was visiting his deceased father's sister, envisaging his journey as that of a loving nephew rather than an *iné-amé* member with a specific request. As we climbed up out of Waé Rebo on an overgrown path, Talis stressed that this was a journey he made very rarely, despite being extremely fond of his aunt. He explained that since he had no sisters, there had been no 'joining' marriages in his generation. However, he hoped that one of his own daughters would in the future contract a *tungku* marriage, in order to maintain links with this aunt and so that he could continue to travel along this favourite path. This shows how Manggarai men feel the paths of various womenfolk as emotionally resonant trails in their own kinship landscapes.

Although apparently spontaneous, Talis's journey was made at a time after harvesting when he was able to take an appropriate gift of rice. As with Iné Aga's recollections of taking chickens to her mother, or the money taken for an *ongko* ritual, this shows that it is not only people who travel along marriage paths, but also exchange goods. When I walked with one woman through the forest to her natal village, her father-in-law recalled a time in the past when he had helped to bring a buffalo along the same path. Today, one often sees people walking carrying a live chicken in a basket, or strapping a trussed-up pig onto the back of a truck as they set off for a marriage event. As described earlier, such livestock are often used to represent groups related through marriage. Moreover, preparing such goods is as much a part of journeys along marriage paths as are the actions of departure, walking, and arrival. When married 'sisters and daughters' are due to return from a visit to their natal home, they are always given small bundles of cooked rice to take, intricately tied up with palm leaves. These are called *supak* and are a key gift from *iné-amé*, often eaten by the woman, her husband, and children as they stop for a rest at the side of the path on their journey home.

Throughout eastern Indonesia, such movements of exchange goods, whether valuables or perishables, are often thought to be as significant as the movement of people. For the Kodi of Sumba, a 'path' primarily refers to

the direction of exchange goods: the 'path of beasts and ear pendants' goes to wife-givers, whilst the 'path of cloth and pigs' leads to the wife-takers (Needham 1980a:37). Similarly, in the Tanimbar Islands, male and female valuables flow in opposite directions along exchange pathways (McKinnon 1991:113). However, in Manggarai, paths are overwhelmingly imagined as being travelled by people, since it is human movement that makes a trail. This is not to say that people in Sumba or Tanimbar are not also fundamentally aware of the human movement that makes a trail. Rather, it is a matter of emphasis: Manggarai paths are always conceived as paths of people rather than exchange goods. Moreover, the main exchange goods given – rice and livestock – connect with the importance of commensality in Manggarai social life. Memories of pathways are quite literally fed by communal meals of rice and meat. Indeed, as women's recollections of their marriages showed, such acts of ingestion are closely connected with acts of release, particularly the shedding of tears.¹⁶ The flow of tears along marriage paths is particularly apparent after a death, when affinal ties are reactivated by a series of mortuary rituals. After the death of one young child, *woé* and *iné-amé* began to gradually arrive in Kombo to join in the ritualized crying. The most poignant of these arrivals was that of the child's maternal grandfather, who wailed loudly as he entered the village. Not only did this man's journey mirror his daughter's *padong* to Kombo, but his tears mirrored her own crying when she had left her natal village long ago. For the Manggarai, travelling creates paths of alliance, and arrivals and departures lead to communal meals and tears.

Of course, the significance of marriages being paths that are formed by travel is that sometimes they may become overgrown and neglected. When news reached one woman that her father had died, she refused to attend his final death ritual, claiming her brothers had 'forgotten' her and her path, never travelling to see her or inform her of family events. Such amnesia can occasionally have dangerous consequences, as when one 'new path' bride died shortly after her *padong* to her husband's village. Many saw this as the responsibility of her in-laws, who had failed to 'root' (*wu'at*) the marriage journey with the groom's mother's natal kin in Waé Rebo. Although not contracting a *tungku* marriage, the *woé* should still have respected the origins of their family's blood by returning to sacrifice a chicken with their original *iné-amé*. Such rituals to 'root the feet' (*wu'at wa'i*) in an origin village are also common before a *wagal* or *kémpu*, or before a young person goes away to study.

These 'rooting' rituals raise the issue of how the images and actions of movement that I have described here relate to the botanical idioms common in eastern Indonesian kinship talk. Across the region, metaphors such as 'planting' prevail (Fox 1971): the mother's brother may be called the

¹⁶ I am grateful to Susanne Küchler for bringing this point to my attention.

'trunk' (Barnes 1974:249) or 'ground' (Beatty 1990:464) of his sister's children, who are in turn conceived as shoots or 'sprouts' (McKinnon 1991:111). In Manggarai, botanical images of 'rooting' connect with the significance of origins. A woman is rather like a forest climber since, however far she may travel along her marriage path, the source of her reproductive capacity and labour always remains in her roots of origin. Failing to 'feed' and remember these roots will inevitably damage the prosperity and fertility of the woman, her husband, and their children. Thus, since the notion of a path implies both a beginning point and an end point (Parmentier 1987:132), journeys along marriage paths by *iné-amé* or *woé* acknowledge the (hierarchical) connection of 'roots' and stretchy plants.

Conclusion: gendered movement and the landscape of relatedness

This article has shown how the widespread eastern Indonesian notion of a marriage 'path' blurs the boundaries between real and symbolic trails. The Manggarai marriage process is surrounded by the spatial symbolism of ritual metaphors, with textiles presented to 'place' and 'accompany', and ransomed journeys held at alliance events. However, it also involves a number of actual journeys, including the *padong*, journeys to death rituals, and informal visits to remembered aunts. These journeys constitute marriage paths as trails through the landscape and as historical connections between families. Such paths are kept open through active remembering, and those involved in an alliance connection must travel, bringing with them stories, gifts, and foodstuffs.

Ethnographically, it is worth noting that path imagery also appears in other contexts of Manggarai life. For example, goods that open up lines of communication at Manggarai sacrificial rituals – most notably money and chickens – may be described as 'paths'. More intriguingly, elders sitting down with chickens, ready to begin a ritual, will sometimes say 'well, let's find the right path!' (*jadi, kawé halang se tu'ung gé!*). Here, paths are avenues of communication that have to be found, suggesting the existence of a number of possible routes, some more correct than others. Such a use of path imagery connects with the riskier aspects of alliance relationships in Manggarai. For, whilst travelling an old *tungku* path is relatively easy, forging a new connection is more difficult: the twists and turns of the way remain unpredictable, as do the kinds of gifts that might be appreciated. Moreover, no marriage path can be assumed to be fixed and unchanging. Despite dire predictions of the fatal consequences of doing so, alliance relationships are often neglected or forgotten, the undergrowth reclaiming a route to history.

Theoretically, this article has shown the complex intertwining of houses and paths in the constitution of Manggarai kinship and marriage. A Manggarai

dwelling makes little sense (and indeed is sterile) without the paths of married women leading to and away from it. Similarly, affinal ties are not free-floating connections, but are 'rooted' in an origin place. Manggarai kinship and marriage is intimately connected with the landscape, but this landscape is not separate from travel or movement (Hirsch 1995). Indeed, as elsewhere in eastern Indonesia, routes are also involved in the imagination of agnatic as well as affinal links. Thus, 'topogenies' – the 'recitation of an ordered sequence of place names' (Fox 1997:8) – are the primary source of ancestral histories in Manggarai. Since this article has been mainly concerned with marriage paths, it has not concentrated on these other forms of kinship movement. However, it is worth noting that all such forms, whether 'topogenies' or movements back and forth between elder and younger houses (Traube 1986:73), reveal the mutual constitution of dwelling and travelling. Manggarai ancestral histories speak of the movement of whole villages through the landscape, whilst contemporary rituals of village remembrance follow a common pattern of travel back along historical routes to an origin place.

By arguing that travelling paths constitutes kinship and marriage, I have tried to destabilize those approaches that would see eastern Indonesian marriage alliance as constituted only by rules and classifications (Needham 1966, 1980b; Hicks 1984). Moreover, by contrast with the cosmological stress of traditional Leiden School ethnography, this article has revealed more individual, nuanced, and informal aspects of eastern Indonesian life. Such an approach to marriage is crucial if one is to show women as more than simply the channel for male relationships, and men as more than simply the givers or takers of women. However, this is not to deny that there are key differences between men and women with regard to mobility and identity throughout the life-cycle. When newly married, women in Manggarai exist 'in between' (Strathern 1972) two places and two sets of kin as they struggle to establish a new household whilst travelling back with gifts for their parents. By contrast, once a married woman has reached old age, she will have become very much an 'insider' in her husband's village, such that when her own children marry, she does not travel with them, but stays behind to 'root' their journey. Indeed, this is why it has been important to use the Manggarai term *iné-amé* ('mother-father'), since when a daughter marries, her mother is considered a core member of the clan branch who ensure her safe passage to the *woé*.¹⁷ With time, an outsider bride becomes a mother, central to the figuration of alliance relationships.

¹⁷ Although Barnes (1974), Sugishima (1994), and Forth (2001) have described the asymmetries involved in the relationship between groups described as 'mother-father' and 'sister/daughter', they have not focused on the transformative power of time and reproduction in this way.

Unlike women, and following a common Southeast Asian pattern of male travel and migration (Rosaldo 1980:192; Tsing 1993:127-8), Manggarai men have more freedom to travel beyond the local to gain access to outside power. They may work for cash on regional road-building projects, or even travel as far as Malaysia, seeking wealth and experience. Their 'outsider' sisters, by comparison, may choose to show independence by not travelling in marriage, perhaps receiving land in their natal villages. Indeed, in day-to-day life, it is literally 'outsider' women who keep the home fires burning, who provide the domestic anchor that allows a village to negotiate a balance of dwelling and travelling, tapping into outside powers whilst retaining a land-based identity. As women grow older, they begin to forsake the marriage path that earlier defined them; by contrast, their 'insider' husbands are more likely to seek other paths – those of political influence, magical powers, and economic opportunity.

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