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Research Article

Hanging on a Rope: The Current Triangular to Pentagonal Kinship Transformation in Simalungunese

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The article revolves around the present-day transformation of the triangular to pentagon kinship in Simalungunese, Indonesia. Essentially, transformation is a mechanism for connecting and ensuring kinship endurance between the first two generations and the next three after losing parents. This study suggests that this transformation is a renewal process used to restructure resources to maintain commitment, support, participation, and solidarity within a changing society. Kinship serves as a communal reference, a source of motivation, and a social symbol that categorizes and bridges relations and networks. In conclusion, kinship endurance relies on the rope and compass of current and future relationships.

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Introduction

This study relies on classical anthropological assertions, both functionalist and structuralist, concerning the fundamental features of kinship. These characteristics encompass endurance upon the loss of a family member (Morgan, 1871; Malinowski, 1939; Kroeber, 1936; Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Murdock, 1949; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Fortes, 1953; Levi-Strauss, 1969). Kinship only lasts for two generations, primarily through marriage or as long as the parents are alive. The explanations concerning the continuation of kinship after the death of parents are infrequently found. The assertion became subject to postmodernist critique, “deconstructivist,” which prompted family sociology to broaden its inquiries into kinship relationships within networks. However, this development erases the distinctions between the two disciplines by comparing ideas on kinship and family relations across different contexts, rendering them plausible.

The present study offers a chance to document the advancements in social science knowledge and theoretical perspectives based on distinctive phenomena observed in Simalungunese, Indonesia. It focuses on the transformation of triangular (*tolu sahundulan*) to pentagonal (*lima saodoran*) as a means of bridging kinship ties during the funeral of the parents. Transformation represents a form of endurance, renewing connections between the first two generations and the following three through the funeral ceremony. The triangular kinship structure comprises the family (*tondong*) and the recipient of the bride (*Boru*), including the father's brother of the recipient's wife (*sanina*).

In contrast, the pentagonal structure is linked to the funeral, specifically the *sayur matua* (a comprehensive and highly anticipated funeral ceremony where all descendants are married and have grandchildren). During the funeral, the triangular kinship is transformed into a pentagonal by adding two new structures, “the family of the bride to *tondong*” (*tondong ni tondong*) and their “recipient from *boru*” (*boru ni Boru*). The transformation during the funeral of the

mother focuses on the eldest grandson (*pahomppu panggorani*), while during that of the father, it focuses on the eldest son (*anak panggorani*), in keeping with the patrilineal basis.

The transformation from triangular to pentagonal kinship relies on social and cultural mechanisms to renew and uphold family and kinship relationships. This assumption is rooted in social reality, new issues, and pressing interests of contemporary society. Although the transformation is rooted in conjugal and extended families, it is carried out to reinvigorate the structure and stabilize its functions in a changing society. The stability of the structure has an impact on its functions, and vice versa – dysfunction can lead to its instability. Consequently, the transformation connects at least 24 families in the first two generations and 56 in the subsequent three generations following the funeral of the parents.

The essence of triangular and pentagonal kinship lies in the availability of socio-economic, domestic, political, and religious resources in the form of support, commitment, and participation. These resources may be moral, psychological, political, material, cultural, or social and are crucial in joyful and sorrowful times. All of these affirm the concept of being kin and promote mutual behaviour. The difference lies in the fact that triangular kinship only applies during the lifetime of the parents, whereas pentagonal kinship occurs after the funeral of the parents. The transformation is an attempt to comprehend the contemporary human experience and a mechanism for maintaining kinship in the face of new issues and pressing concerns that arise due to dysfunction in modern life.

The study is presented in its preliminary stages, and there is a lack of specific literature, including references, both journals and books, discussing the transformation from triangular to pentagonal kinship. The available references primarily focus on customary procedural manuals, social tolerance, conflict resolution, and the institutionalization of kinship in the social world, while only touching on rites of passage (Damanik, 2022; 2021a; 2021b; 2020; Damanik and Ndong, 2021; Damanik, 2019; Purba, 2019; Damanik, 2016). The novelty of this study lies in the restructuring and renewal of socio-economic, domestic, political, and religious functions. It contributes to classical and neo-classical statements in understanding the endurance of kinship in modern society while exploring resolutions to overcome dysfunction through funeral ceremonies related to its contemporary issues. The present study is particularly intriguing as it involves creative thinking on kinship endurance during the funeral of the parents,

a subject rarely known yet significant in social anthropology. The cultural variations within the Simalungunese are considered a part of the effort of the global society to uphold kinship.

The contemporary Simalungun ethnic group is composed of individuals belonging to the Simalungunese who have lived since the reform era of 1998. They exhibit two main characteristics, namely liberalism and structuralism, which are distributed in both urban and rural areas and adhere to customs and traditions. They possess technological awareness and access to education, obey their leaders, work in groups, have patron-client relationships with bureaucrats, politicians, and farmers, including religious ideologies, and support democracy.

Kinship, a universal human phenomenon, is a social organizational system interconnected through rituals to bind it and family relations in a changing society. However, its formations are based on cultural variations, specifically in the understanding of being kin and the mutuality of being. Transformation is an action word that involves reorganization and restructuring, serving as a mechanism for renewal to maintain function and value. The ecology, mountains, and valleys of the region are significant in the cultivation practices and have implications for triangular and pentagonal kinship, which are distinctive features of the Simalungunese compared to other ethnic groups in North Sumatra.

Triangular kinship, which was derived from the concept of “triangle culinaire” proposed by Levi-Strauss (1965), is the foundation of family and relationships. It is a micro-level dimension that is based on marriage, while the pentagonal type, on the other hand, extends family and relations to obtain greater resources. It is a macro-level dimension that centres around funeral ceremonies and serves as a compass of relations, communal reference, source of motivation, and social symbol to connect social relations. The term hanging on a rope refers to the subjective experience, memory, and narrative of social attachment, “being kin,” and mutuality of being, which represents the social bond created through rituals. The perspective of Godelier (2012; 2019) combined a micro approach based on macro considerations to understand the contemporary dimensions of kinship in a changing society. This approach is thoroughly explained in the theoretical framework description.

Theoretical framework

The renewal of kinship is an ongoing process that requires attention to both internal and external factors. The micro dimension involves consanguineal and affinal relationships, as well as linear and collateral descendants, while the macro dimension concerns pressing contemporary issues and interests. The significance of contemporary kinship extends beyond the micro dimension and encompasses principles of organization, resources, relationality, support, and symbolic foundations of the past and present, and various scholars have discussed the theoretical framework and conceptualizations (Gingrich and Lutter, 2021; Voorhees, Read, Gabora, and Eryomin, 2020; Chapais, 2014).

Kinship studies have been distinguished periodically. Classical studies, for example, concentrate on the micro dimension, examining the consequences of marital relationships such as reproduction, procreation, sexual taboos, socialization, child-rearing, inheritance, and the rights and responsibilities of parents, children, and grandchildren (Morgan, 1871; Malinowski, 1939; Kroeber, 1936; Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Murdock, 1949; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Fortes, 1953; Levi-Strauss, 1969; Holy, 1996; Fox, 2001; Overing, Fortist and Margiotti, 2015). Neoclassical studies also concentrated on the micro dimension but emphasized an eschatological vision, including notions of family privilege, gender, economics, geopolitics, biological and genetic characteristics, personality, subjectivity, social distance, and capital (Hummer, 2018; Erasari, 2017; Jones, 2017; Silander, 2016; Toren and Pauwels eds., 2015; Ottenheimer, 2007; Read, 2001; Peterson and Tylor, 2003).

Classical and neoclassical kinship studies fail to fully explain the complexities of contemporary kinship issues. New and pressing concerns, such as the roles of godparents, same-sex couples, foster parents, biotechnology and genetics, single parents, divorce, and adoption, all have significant implications for family functions. The limitations of these approaches necessitate critical studies that go beyond the traditional focus on affinity and instead consider all relevant themes, including emerging issues and pressing concerns impacting kinship relations within networks (Schneider, 1984; Riggs and Peel, 2016; Parkin, 1997; Schram, 2014; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001; Jones, 2000; Furstenberg, 2020; Shenk and Mattison, 2011; Read, 2007; Hamberger, 2018; Sahlins, 2011; Weber, 2005).

Since the 1980s, the emergence of “new kinship studies” or “after kinship” marks a shift in the paradigm and a re-conceptualization of kinship, where its relevance is highly considered in the humanities and social sciences (Dechaux, 2008; Carsten, 2000; 2004; Shapiro, 2009; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001; Strathern, 2013; Schneider, 1980). Unlike in the past, when kinship was used to differentiate lineages, trace descent, and practices of actual inheritance within filiation and marriage through domestic socio-economic units, biopolitics, and religion (Goody, 1990; 2005; Segalen, 2021; Parkin, 2021), kinship relations and families have now become important components in all societies regardless of their social and cultural contexts (Strathern, 2005; 2014; Barnes, 2006; Dousset and Tcherkezoff, 2012; Shapiro, 2015; Damon, 2015; Gibson, 2011; Godelier, 1978; 2010; 2011; 2012). However, an example of the Baruya in the Papua Highlands highlights the insufficiency of kinship-based relations, and kinship in general, in building a society (Godelier et al., 1998). This means that the concept of a kinship-based society, widely used in the past, is inadequate (Morton, 2020).

According to Godelier (2019), kinship relations and family are among the five prerequisites for human existence. Godelier’s two main assumptions are; (1) relationships existed not only among individuals, such as family, lineage, household, and caste, but also within them simultaneously, and (2) they are governed by the reproduction of life, where social and biological factors form the basis of these relations. Based on these two assumptions, relations are formed through other connections but rarely operate as independent factors and do not inherently cause social change. Contemporary kinship studies prioritize a broad comparative perspective, differentiated analytical terminology, and a middle-range approach that avoids neglecting the relevance of kinship (Gingrich et al., 2021). These three points reflect the macro dimension, new issues, and pressing concerns that also influence the transformation of kinship (Schneider, 1980; Read, 2001). The approach combines the micro dimension based on macro considerations, finding a middle ground and methodological integration to understand the dimensions of contemporary kinship (Parkin, 2021). Macro considerations are necessary to sustain being kin and the mutuality of residing in a changing society (Cherlin, 2012; Miller, 2007; Brown, 2015; Bruner, 1992).

In his book, “The Metamorphoses of Kinship” (2012), Godelier outlined the metamorphosis of kinship alongside the decline of marriage, high divorce rates, increased same-sex partnerships, and the rise of

marriage and adoption. The changes in kinship are unrelated to lineage organization, sexual taboos, or the significance of family as a primary institution in society. Moreover, the modifications do not affect the independence of raising children, and the quality of kinship relations remains intact (Strathern, 2014; Barnes, 2006). These changes reflect intrinsic transformations in line with the logic, practices, innovations, and inventions of contemporary culture and human thought structures based on biopolitics, commodification, and globalization (Moore and McKinnon, 2001; Dechaux, 2008; Jackson, 2015; Geschiere, 2000; Gardner, 2008; Aryal, 2018; Moore, 2004; Preaud, 2013; Strathern, 2005). The approach has been successful in pioneering breakthroughs in collaborative kinship analysis.

Sustaining social relationships amidst the changes in human beings for the global order, kinship requires transformation. Globalization, which encompasses various socio-economic, political, and religious dimensions, necessitates interconnections among individuals. Transformation is an affirmation of social change and involves restructuring membership to maintain functionality under the dynamics of life. Kinship serves as a communal reference, a source of motivation, and a social symbol bridging relationships in a changing society. It acts as a compass of relations, indicating where support is obtained.

Method

The literature review is a sequential process that involves four stages; (1) discovering relevant publications through abstract reading in databases, (2) evaluating the relevance of these publications to the study, (3) categorizing these publications based on the phase of analysis and type of issues addressed, and (4) searching for the most cited publications through e-books, e-journals, and official websites (vom Brocke et al., 2015). However, due to the impact of Covid-19 and ethical considerations regarding the validity and objectivity of comprehensive information (Schutt, 2017), the study duration was relatively long, from August 2021 to February 2023. This is a qualitative social study (Bryman, 2012), carried out with a mixed approach (Creswell and Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2014), which is considered adequate for providing comprehensive explanations of the focus and object (Greene and Hall, 2010). It focuses on the transformation mechanisms from triangular to pentagonal kinship, underlying factors, urgency, and significance (Schutt, 2016). The data and information

are carefully selected and analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of these factors.

Revealing the details of transformations during the funerals of parents, participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD) were used. The participatory observation involved attending funeral ceremonies to capture natural situations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and to note or record transformation details, such as mechanisms, symbols, narratives, equipment, expressions, and body language. The subsequent in-depth and structured interviews followed customary protocols (*anakboru Jabu*) as well as scholarly and customary institutions (*Partuha Maujana Simalungun*) with key informants to explore the mechanisms, urgency, and significance of kinship transformations, and these activities were recorded using a tape recorder. FGDs were conducted to gather broader information, with the first one occurring on November 12, 2021, and the second on September 28, 2023, for confirmation and feedback on the findings. Each FGD involved 25 participants and was preceded by the presentation of the author and responses from the respondents, with activities documented through photos and video.

Between August 2021 and February 2023, eleven *sayur matua* funeral ceremonies involving four males and seven females were observed. The ceremonies were held in various locations: seven in Simalungun Regency, two in Deli Serdang Regency, and two in Medan City. The average age of the deceased parents was between 64 and 81 years, with three to five children and eight to 14 grandchildren. There were exceptions; three parents passed away after having two to three children, while a parent had great-great-grandchildren. The collected data were categorized into three, namely archival data based on customs, elicited data from interviews and FGDs, and field notes from participatory observation, following social study methods (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

During the data collection process, reflective data were obtained through observation, inquiry, and examination (Kozinets, 2010). The information gathered was in the form of narrative text, describing a sequence of events based on the experiences of the informants. The acquired data were transcribed verbatim, categorized, and manually tabulated based on specific characteristics, narratives, and meanings, and to minimize subjectivity, the information was compared between subjects. Qualitative and interpretive analysis was conducted on the data to uncover new insights, theoretical and practical

contributions, conclusions, and potential follow-up plans.

Findings and Discussion

The process of forming triangular kinship in Simalungun is centred around marriage (*marhajabuan*) and involves a minimum of 24 families from the three building structures. By marrying a woman (*palahou boru*) or a man (*paunjuk anak*), a new nuclear family is formed, and the three structures are joined as one kin unit of kin. Despite the women not being paternal cousins, according to the cross-cousin marriage and clan exogamy rules, presenting the dowry (*bonaunjuk*) makes them biological daughters. The focus on the mother highlights the uncle, who is considered the visible god on earth and the source of all sources of life, as a tribute to the formation of the nuclear family (*tondong bona*). When parents pass away, the focus shifts to the nuclear family, where the uncle or the descendants become a source of strength (*tondong pamupus*), and the focus on grandchildren (*pahompu*), great-grandchildren (*nono*), and great-great-grandchildren (*nini*) becomes a light (*tondong mataniari*). The structure is revered according to its position as a source of advice and blessings.

Essentially, marriage, more specifically in Simalungunesse, is characterized by three mechanisms that involve a woman leaving the family to become a new mother (*inang nabayu*) in the household of the man to continue the function of mother-in-law: (1) the fulfilment of customary obligations (*pinaikkat*), (2) partial fulfilment (*naniasokan*), and (3) eloping or total non-fulfilment (*marlua-lua*). The last two mechanisms are considered incomplete but can be perfected by repaying the customary debt (*ngunduh mantu*). The woman is sent off with clothing, money, and gold, which serve as the initial capital for the new family, known as the “departure attire” (*hiou parpaikkat*). In the future, the items are referred to as the “last attire” (*hiou parpudi*) and are accounted for by the recipient when the person who provided them passes away. During the funerals of the father and the mother, the “last attire” is worn by the eldest son and grandson, respectively. The handover process allows their coronation to continue kinship in the next generation. The coronation of the eldest son in the “last attire” during the father’s funeral is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Coronation of the eldest son during the father’s funeral

Source: Research documentation, 2022

The legitimacy of the prospective new mother and the affected relationships is crucial in the three aforementioned marriage customs. The status of the new mother in the residence of the man is considered valid only when the mother-in-law acknowledges it, which requires two conditions to be fulfilled; (1) coronation (*marparnayog*) involving wearing the ceremonial crown, being in a position of respect (*luluan*), offering rice (*borastenger*), recognition as the new mother, and sharing rice among the audience, and (2) announcement and legitimization as the new mother (*parunjukon*), celebrated through a feast that marks the coronation.

Initially, the installation of the new mother is confirmed and legitimized by the “four basic relatives” (*suhi amfang naopat*), paternal relations from the male side consisting of the father-in-law (*parsimatuaon*), the eldest brother of the father (*parbapatuaon*), the wife of the eldest brother of the father (*parnasikahaan*), and the husband of the eldest sister of the father (*anakboru jabu*). They are considered the same “clan siblings” (*sanina*) when focusing on the new family and “table siblings” (*sanina sapangankonon*) when focusing on grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. They serve as a structure for discussion and consultation.

In addition, the receiving family, referred to as *boru*, functions as a mediator, intermediary, and source of strength to the family of the wife. When the parents of the new family pass away, this structure evolves into the “wife recipient from *boru*” (*boru niboru* or *boru mintori*), responsible for organizing and ensuring the success of activities such as rites of passage or social events. In the case of customary or social disputes involving *tondong* or *sanina*, it serves as an advocate,

negotiator, mediator, or intermediary between the disputing parties to establish peace. However, to carry out its activities, it coordinates with *sanina* and seeks advice from *tondong* with the associated roles, always persuaded or enticed.

During the recognition and legitimization process of the new mother, a scarf (known as *hiou suri-suri*) is used to bind the two spouses together, signifying the start and continuity of their relationship. Meanwhile, in the presence of the “four basic relatives,” all male and female relations introduce themselves and declare their respective roles, rights, and obligations. The announcement has significant implications for how they address each other, both on a personal and communal level, to convey their closeness and interconnectedness. Upon recognition, the four basic relatives make a formal declaration, signifying the formation of the triangular kinship.

The triangular kinship system promotes mutual support, cooperation, and communalism among members of the 24 families. Despite differences in social status, obligations, rights, and roles, individuals are bound by a shared responsibility to help and respect one another. This support system fosters unity, mutual assistance, and harmony, making it a valuable resource for individuals in all aspects of life. The significance of marriage lies not only in establishing the nuclear family through the legitimization of the new mother but also in recognizing and establishing the triangular kinship relationship that endures in the ups and downs of life.

The triangular kinship structure is limited to two generations, specifically while the parents are still alive. When they pass away, the structure transforms into a pentagonal one through funeral ceremonies where the role of the uncle is fundamental. Besides following customary processes, the uncle acknowledges and reaffirms the relationship. During the one to two-hour funeral ceremony, the “last attire” is the main medium, and the eldest grandson and son wear the crown of kinship during the mother’s and father’s funerals, respectively. Its presentation is part of the most sacred and dramatic ceremony, accompanied by traditional musical chants.

The “last attire” is a traditional cloth, considered a crown with profound meaning. It symbolizes the initial formation of kinship during the marriage and its reinforcement during the funeral ceremony. The attire is attached to the deceased before being handed over to the uncle, who passes it on to the recipient. According to Maripen Saragih for personal communication held on June 23, 2022.

The last attire, which is attached to the deceased, is pulled by the uncle and worn by either the eldest son or grandson during the funeral of the father or the mother, respectively. Acceptance of this offering is crucial as it symbolizes an eternal relationship. However, if the attire is rejected and buried with the deceased, the eternity of the relationship is considered to be broken, thereby eliminating the link with the next three generations. The eldest son becomes the successor of the kinship attire (*anak panggorani*), while the eldest grandson is reaffirmed (*pahompu buha baju*). Both signify the continuity, steadfastness, and endurance of kinship, reinforced by the magical power of ceremonies and rituals.

The presentation of the last attire during the funeral of a parent is a significant moment in the perpetuation of kinship ties. It symbolically anoints the eldest son as the successor of kinship for the funeral of a father and the eldest grandson as the successor for the funeral of a mother. This event marks the transformation from a triangular to a pentagonal family structure and reflects a reorganization of membership, rights, obligations, roles, and functions. During the presentation of the last attire, all connected family members are reminded of their positions before the existence of primordial bonds, and they are led to empty themselves. The moment prompts reflection, evaluation, and introspection on past relationships and embodies the urgency of kinship ties for future generations. Traditional music and chants often accompany the ceremony, leading to tears and even hysteria as family members contemplate the loss of their loved one and reaffirm their commitment, support, and participation in the generations left behind. Josef Saragih, concerning personal communication held on August 12, 2022, emphasized the crucial role of kinship relations and family as the foundation (*ulang lupa bona*) of society’s future.

“At the funeral of a parent, the responsibility of maintaining kinship ties is passed down to the eldest son or grandson, ensuring the continuity of the family lineage for the next three generations. This main kinship line spans five generations, starting with marriage and reinforced through funerals, all to preserve the sense of belonging and mutual support that comes with being part of a group.”

The transition from a triangular to a pentagonal kinship structure involves the addition of two new

structures, “the wife family to the *tondong*” (*tondong nitondong*) and “the wife recipient from the *boru*” (*boru niboru*). The addition is motivated by the desire to honour ancestors, particularly those from the paternal side of the family. Triangular kinship focuses on the new family as a tribute to the mother through marriage, while pentagonal kinship is a tribute to the father through funerals. Integrating both structures promotes interconnectedness among 80 families, which is vital for life resources, support, commitment, and participation in marriage and funerals. The essence of these resources lies in the strategies and anticipatory measures for future uncertainties.

The funeral ceremonies represent a transformation of kinship by adding two new structures, which renew the triangular structure. The previous three structures and the new two structures form a pentagon, which reflects the front view of the traditional Simalungun house, symbolizing the interconnectedness of 80 families and their kinship relations. This pentagon is the big house that encompasses families bound by kinship, highlighting the understanding that a family cannot exist independently without the support of their relatives. Pentagonal kinship is a comprehensive concept encompassing family relationships based on ties, symbolic feelings, a sense of belonging, and social solidarity. Figure 2 illustrates the process of transformation from triangular to pentagonal kinship.

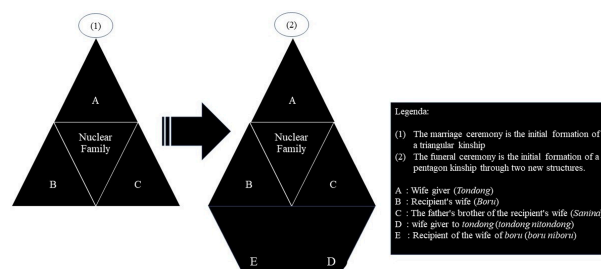


Figure 2. Transformation of triangular to pentagonal kinship

The triangular and pentagonal kinship patterns reflect the relationship ecology of mountains and lowlands, representing both the macro and microcosms of human relationships. Triangular kinship is linked to dry cultivation, where the sky is the macrocosm and is considered the place of God (*tondong*). Following the patrilineal understanding, the sky is the source of water, the God who distributes blessings to the microcosm (*sanina and boru*) and to maintain and nurture social balance, these blessings must not be

halted within one structure. Humans always face the sky, hoping for abundance and blessings.

Pentagonal kinship, on the other hand, is rooted in wet cultivation, where the mountain represents the macrocosm and is considered the abode of God (*tondong nitondong*). Following a patrilineal understanding, the mountain is the source of water, the God who distributes blessings that flow to the centre (*tondong*), to the left (*sanina*), to the right (*boru*), and finally at the estuary (*boru niboru*). To maintain social balance, humans always face the mountain, hoping for blessings for everyone. Disruptions of blessings within either the triangular or pentagonal structure can cause dysfunction in the other structure, which can be remedied through rituals and ceremonies, restructuring, and moments of reflection and reconstruction, particularly in the face of death.

The transformation process involves two key aspects: (1) creating new structures, where the patrilineal system designates the eldest son as the successor in kinship during the funeral of his father and the eldest grandson during the funeral of his mother, and (2) changes in roles, positions, rights, and obligations that require both material and immaterial sacrifices, extending beyond the ceremonies to all areas of life, including happiness and sadness. The essence of the transformation lies in providing resources based on commitment, support, and participation following cultural innovation and invention, which would benefit all aspects of genuine social life in the future. During ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, and other rites of passage, relatives play an essential role in supporting success, planning, organizing, and assuming responsibility. Similarly, relatives are often the first to seek assistance in everyday life, such as in economics, politics, religion, education, health, agriculture, and other areas. In this way, kinship becomes a crucial factor and network in community life, emphasizing that society is based on kinship.

Funeral ceremonies in Simalungun culture have a magical power beyond mere sanctions. They serve as a cohesive force that lubricates the effectiveness of functions, perpetuates social references, and constructs social symbols to renew and maintain relationships and networks. The restructuring during these ceremonies affects not only individuals but also entire kinship units and expanded communalism. Through transformation, five generations or 80 families become a single kinship unit, reflecting interconnectedness based on lineage and marriage. These relationships are nurtured and developed through transformation to maintain their

strength over time. Table 1 provides an overview of the pentagonal kinship structure in Simalungun.

Unit structures	Basis relation	Social functions	Social role	Pattern of relation
<i>Tondongni tondong</i>	Giving a wife to <i>Tondong</i>	Fulfil advice and blessing	Illuminate the whole lineage	Worship
<i>Tondong</i>	Recipient's wife from <i>Tondong</i> .	Source of advice and blessing	Strengthening the entire lineage	Guidance
<i>Sanina</i>	Family from the same clan as the nuclear family	Source of deliberation	Consider all possibilities	Adore
<i>Boru</i>	Family of recipients of wives from a nuclear family	Resources	Build partnerships	Persuade
<i>Boru niboru</i>	Recipient of a wife from the <i>Boru</i>	Fulfil of resources	Develop partnerships	Respectful

Table 1. Outline of pentagonal relationship structure

The transformation of the pentagon kinship is only carried out at the "most expected funeral," with the basic motivation to live at least three to four generations. This mechanism is always carried out at parents' funerals to perpetuate social relationships and networks. The transformation into pentagons, for example, perpetuates relationships based on greater participation and social security for future lives. Kinship ties do not fade when the funeral ceremony provides a substitute structure for continuing functions, or vice versa. The funeral ceremony is a social institution within the framework of customs, a group idea, not just an individual, but an important and communal phenomenon that affects many people. The magical power of the ceremony, according to its position, leads individuals and all participants to a primordial situation to be faithful to their social function. This understanding does not only have implications for the continuity of kinship but also for the existence of social security for all life activities.

The transition from a triangular to a pentagonal structure is a way of adjusting the structure and functioning of society to suit its evolving dynamics, particularly concerning distance, increasing needs, and potential socio-economic, political, and religious opportunities. This transformational mechanism is commonly used to address the high occurrence of single parents, widows, or widowers, whether due to divorce or the death of a spouse, as well as single individuals. By relying on the extended kinship system, which employs larger networks of relatives and

extended family, negative economic and political impacts on individuals, particularly concerning resource availability, can be mitigated. Therefore, despite the inevitability of the passing of a parent, the kinship network guarantees the future well-being of individuals on a larger scale.

The purpose of the transformation is to facilitate access to domestic socio-economic, biopolitical, and religious resources, as well as to reinforce the intrinsic values of relational ties in response to change. Despite the loss of members, the sustainability of these resources is revived through cultural funeral practices, which serve to bind the networks and relational ties formed from marriage. This implies that classical and neoclassical paradigms emphasize social networks and relationships, restored through rituals and ceremonies to balance structure and function. Therefore, the loss of structure does not lead to dysfunction, as the transformational mechanism restores new structures and functions.

The renewal of kinship, specifically through restructuring, aims to promote greater participation, support, and commitment in the future. The process prepares individuals through communal relations and networks, serving as a strategy and tactic to equip them to anticipate new challenges and concerns that may arise. It encompasses the macro dimension of being kin to sustain the mutuality of being, despite the uncertainties of future obstacles. In this context, extended family networks and kinship relations are advantageous, even without a direct lineage connection, procreation, sexual taboos, or dependence on child-

rearing. Therefore, kinship relations become a fundamental motivation for human existence, which aligns with the view of Godelier that kinship relations exist not only among individuals. It is also simultaneous within individuals, governed by the reproduction of life where the basis of relations is both social and biological.

Kinship transformation, the findings of this study have three basic aspects; (1) expanding and strengthening kinship to reach larger participants and relationships, (2) manifested through ceremonies, using special symbols, promises, or personal forms as a form of relationship, and (3) centred on the availability of resources, including social, political, household economy, and religion. The main purpose of transformation is a change in structure to maintain the macro function of relations in a changing social world. Kinship research novelty is the categorization and bridge of social networks in the future. Kinship is a social relationship that depends on ties. Kinship is the compass of relationships. Without relationships, it would be impossible for humans to survive in a dynamic world. Relations, thus hanging on a rope, transform and preserve kinship for the future.

This study affirms the “new kinship studies” or “after kinship paradigm,” particularly the ideas of Godelier, with a fundamental consideration of the macro dimension in building society. However, the findings show the mechanism of attachment through kinship relations and extended family networks in society through funeral ceremonies, which are not explicitly emphasized by Godelier or classical and neoclassical paradigms. The transformation represents a renewal of structure and function, a mechanism to connect and maintain kinship relations and extended family networks within a changing social arena. Kinship serves as a reference for communalism, a source of motivation, and a social symbol, providing categorization to bridge relations and networks in overcoming dysfunction.

Kinship relies on stable relationships and networks to perpetuate itself and ensure its endurance. Therefore, the present and future relations serve as the rope and compass that guide this process. Even though the functions of social organization and structure are essential aspects of kinship, it is also understood as a collection of symbols, categories, representations, and beliefs that individuals use to establish bonds, networks, and meaning. This shift in understanding has moved the object of kinship from social anthropology to cultural anthropology in postmodernist perspectives. The purpose of this study

is to examine the issues surrounding the development of kinship studies and the impact of “deconstructivist” approaches. The primary focus is on finding a middle ground that effectively combines cultural representations and social relations analysis. In this context, the process is viewed as a system of action, a relationship configuration that depends on the actions of group members and has an impact on their behaviour.

As a result, it is a symbolic system that is an integral part of inter-kinship relations and cannot be separated from the indigenous concepts used to define it for individuals. The findings offer a mechanism for rebuilding relationships and bridging the gap between classical and neoclassical anthropological paradigms as well as postmodernist approaches to kinship studies. These findings are essential in developing kinship, extended family relationships, and social networks, serving as fundamental building blocks of society. This study distinguishes itself from studies in other regions, where it plays a critical role in establishing social relations.

Based on the findings of this study, kinship endurance hangs on a rope, one of which is through the transformation of a triangular relationship into a pentagon. Although the formation of kinship is through marriage and is valid throughout the marriage age, the death of members is anticipated through the transformation of kinship at the funeral ceremony. The linkage between marriage ceremonies and funerals, at this point, is a mechanism to connect, expand, and strengthen social relations. All the advice and proverbs, including the tears at both ceremonies, are oriented towards the joy of the new relationships being formed. This mechanism offers a new direction for kinship studies, emphasizing not only personal closeness but also the urgency and significance of social relations in the future. This renewal process moves from the micro to the macro dimension, incorporating cultural innovation and logic based on the urgency of maintaining relations and networks. It is the compass of relationships, whom we depend on, and why and how these relationships function socially. The mutuality of being kin entails commitment, support, and participation in various domestic, socio-economic, biopolitical, and religious contexts. The mechanisms of kinship endurance may be discovered elsewhere, but the uniqueness of this study is real and continues today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, kinship transformation is a mechanism for overcoming dysfunction and revitalizing relationships and networks. The key focus is on maintaining the sense of being kin and mutual support in the social arena, specifically during loss. The mutuality of being kin entails commitment, support, and participation in various domestic, socio-economic, biopolitical, and religious contexts. This renewal process moves from the micro to the macro dimension, incorporating cultural innovation and logic. The macro dimensions are selected based on the urgency of maintaining relations and networks. The stability of these relationships is essential to perpetuating kinship to ensure it does not falter. Kinship serves as a symbol of communalism, a source of motivation and social categorization, and a means of bridging relationships and networks. It relies on present and future relationships to guide and anchor its continuity. The findings of this study offer a mechanism for renewing kinship and maintaining its structure, bridging classical anthropological paradigms and postmodernist approaches. However, further study is recommended to explore the quality of relationships after funeral ceremonies, as social dynamics play a crucial role.

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