

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF *MAPALUS* IN THE MINAHASA, NORTH SULAWESI

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Abstrak

Salah satu suku bangsa sebagai penduduk asli di Propinsi Sulawesi Utara adalah orang Minahasa. Mereka adalah penduduk mayoritas pada beberapa kabupaten dan kota di daerah itu. *Mapalus* adalah suatu unsur dalam kebudayaan mereka yang pada hakikatnya adalah tolong menolong dalam lingkup kelompok untuk mencapai tujuan tertentu yang mulanya bersumber dari kegiatan pertanian.

Menarik untuk disimak tentang telah terjadinya perkembangan besar dalam sejarah *mapalus* akibat pengaruh politik kolonial, sistem ekonomi uang, diversifikasi sistem sosial yang semakin kompleks, termasuk pengaruh politik nasional dan lokal. Dengan membaginya atas beberapa periode ternyata *mapalus* memang telah mengalami serangkaian perubahan namun esensinya tetap bertahan karena keluwesannya menyerap pengaruh dari luar, bahkan efektif untuk menggerakkan dan mengarahkan partisipasi warga masyarakat dalam pembangunan nasional dan daerah.

Keywords: Minahasa, cooperative system, mutual help.

Introduction

For Minahasans, *mapalus* is a familiar term. They associate it with a form of activities which character and purpose is to help others. This help, of course, must be given according to a specific procedure. However, such a mutual help institution is not unique to the Minahasans; every ethnic group in Indonesia, and indeed throughout the world, probably possesses its own version.

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In Poerwadarminta's dictionary (1966) a *mapalus* is defined as a mutual help organization (*organisasi tolong menolong*), while the later describes *mapalus* as "co-operation, collaboration, teamwork (in a village community)". Meanwhile, the term is also appears in another dictionary of Wojoasito (1980) although it does not indicate the origin of the word, which probably intended to popularize it as a term of all Indonesians, as national term.

The term is interesting from a linguistic standpoint because of its development. Several Minahasan informants said that *mapalus* derived from the stem *palus* and the prefix *ma-*, which *palus* itself originated, they claimed, from the word *elus* together with the prefix *pa-*. If supplied with the suffix *-an*, *elus* referred to a type of plant which leaves are used for wrapping boiled rice. A word *palus* is also known in Tondano language with the meaning of 'to pour', so that *mapalus* can also carry the meaning of 'pouring the contents of one container into another'.

Let's turn now to the historical development of *mapalus*. My discussion begins from a postulate that Minahasans have possessed it as a system of mutual aid ever since time immemorial of their origin as an ethnic group. At least, it is known that when the first Westerners entered the Minahasa, *mapalus* was already existed, and indeed formed an integral part of Minahasan social life.

The Period Before 1680

When Westerners entered Minahasa, they found that Minahasans possessed a form of government differed from that of their neighbours. The peoples of Mongondow in the south and Sangihe in the north implemented a system of government based upon kingdomship, while Minahasans had no such system. The Minahasan system was based upon the *walak*. Graafland writes that the Minahasa originally had only four *walaks*: Tompakewa (Tontemboan), Tombulu, Tontumaratas (Toulour) and Tonte-oh (Tonsea) (Graafland, 1898: 322-325). But changes must have occurred by the early 16th century; since a treaty concluded between the Minahasans and the VOC on 10 January 1679 mentioned eight *walaks*, including Pasan-Ratahan, Ponosakan, Tonsawang and Bantik in addition to the abovementioned four (Godee Molsbergen, 1928: 94).

Each of the eight *walaks* occupied its own geographically distinct home territory. Moreover, they spoke different languages and dialects. Kalangie, discussing Minahasan culture, distinguished at least eight groups on the basis of geography, language, and dialect differences (Kalangie, 1979: 143-144). Although the eight *walaks* occupied scattered territories and possessed different languages and dialects, they were all familiar with *mapalus*, with variations in its practise. Each *walak* was self-governed and had its own territory and its own people. A territorial and genealogical bond laid behind the unity of each *walak*. As Holleman wrote, there were tens of thousands of such territorial and/or genealogical societies in Indonesia, all of them hierarchically structured, long before the arrival of foreign influences (Holleman, 1971 : 10-11).

Subordinate to each *walak* were a number of settlement called *wanua*, roughly equivalent to today's *desa* (village). The term *wanua* derived from *kawanua*, which means: of the same settlement, and linked by bonds of kinship. Essentially, any occurrence, which happened at the level of the *walak* had roots at *wanua* level (Adam, 1975 : 38). The term *kawanua* was used not only for members of a common *wanua*, but also to address members of the same *walak* and indeed Minahasans in general. The word *kawanua* indicates common origin, common *adat* and custom, common language and common dwelling place, all of which connote a sense of security. The *wanua* was also the fundamental unit of settlement and the primary social community in the Minahasa. It indicates the importance of the role of the *wanua* (Parengkuan, 1985).

Among the *kawanua*, rules governing social relation protected the existence both individuals and groups. These rules that controlled interaction between individuals; and individuals with the group, were usually referred to as customary (*adat*) law. These rules were called *kanaramen* (Taulu, 1974: 7). Besides *kanaramen*, the social life of the *kawanua* was also regulated according to *ta'ar*, the will of the ancestors (Parengkuan, 1985: 15). *Kanaramen* and *ta'ar* determined the rules governing *mapalus* and the practise of *mapalus* made constant reference to them. Graafland writes that the institution of *mapalus* dated from “*de oudste tijden*”, and has its origins in “*onderling hulpbetoon*” during work in the fields (Graafland, 1898: 156). It is impossible to date the advent of *mapalus*, but it seemed to be originated from mutual activities associated with traditional agriculture, specifically with the *ladang* system of cultivation.

The following diagram shows the relationship between *kanaramen* and *ta'ar* and the system of rules which they established to govern the practise of *mapalus*, rules observed by every *mapalus* group throughout the Minahasa.

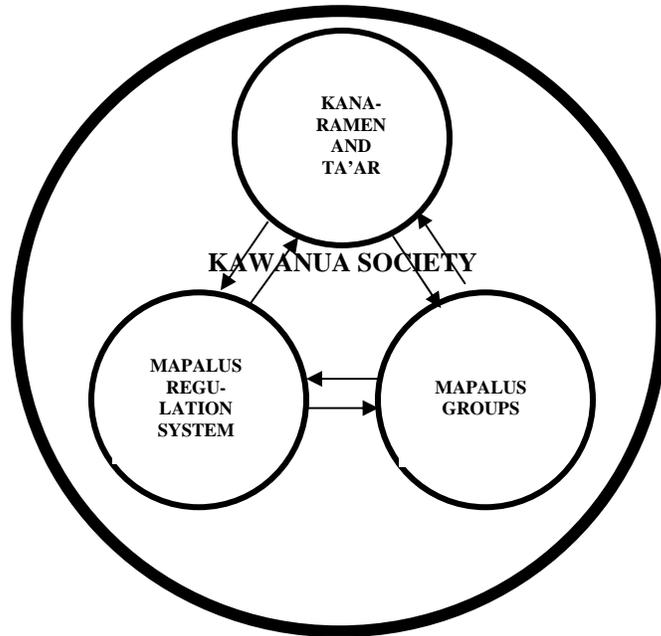


Diagram 1²
Mapalus As An Integral Part of *Kawanua* Society Before C. 1680

Before the arrival of Westerners, Minahasan produced rice as well as various forest products. On old Portugese map, the Minahasa is marked as the “Island of Damar” (Watusake, 1968: 7). Meanwhile the Dutch stressed the Minahasa’s role as food producer by called it the “Granary of the Moluccas” (Parengkuan, 1985: 13). Its main production was *ladang* rice. From the early 19th century onwards, Minahasans

² Diagram 1, which also introduces a specific periodisation scheme, attempts to illustrate this situation. The diagrams in this article may be regarded as a broad outline of the history of the development of *mapalus* in the Minahasa.

began adopting the *sawah* system of farming, with the people of Tondano played the pioneering role (Graafland, 1898: 156).

The system of rules rooted in *kanaramen* and *ta'ar* controlled the size of the *mapalus* group, its leadership, and attachment, condition of work, sanctions, and so forth. The system also provided guarantees for *mapalus* members regarding their consumption rights before, during and after the work. This was done regarding their rights to receive help according to a fixed roster, and regarding certain other members' privileges.

Members were obligated to know and understand the regulations. In the beginning, the whole *wanua* – extolling the collective principle–, formed a single work group in order to cultivate its land. There was no individual or family land ownership within the *wanua*. All land was in fact the common property of the *walak*, and its exploitation and supervision was under the responsibility of the *wanua*. *Mapalus* groups using a particular system of rules, would constantly referred back to *kanaramen* and *ta'ar*, so that there was always scope for new regulations to perfect the system or adjust it to changes. This control of the *mapalus* was elegant and straightforward, which made possible the introduction of many variations in the course of its subsequent development.

On 10 January 1679, Minahasans concluded a treaty of friendship and allegiance with the VOC (Godee Molsbergen, 1928: 94). For various reasons, this date is used here as a benchmark for the periodisation of the history of *mapalus*. A clause of this treaty required the Minahasans to meet a rice production target for the first time. Each *wanua* had previously been free to work or not to work its own area or *ladang* ground as it thought fit. The *mapalus* groups, which included all members of the *wanua*, had never been required by contract to pursue production targets. The treaty came into force as soon as it was signed in 1679, but I have taken 1680 as the watershed on the basis that a year or so must have been necessary for adjustment to the stipulations of the treaty. The *wanua* and the *mapalus* groups which provided the backbone of the rice producing effort had first to learn what was required of them. The time interval was also necessary to ascertain whether *kanaramen* and *ta'ar* would sanction a system of *mapalus* regulations geared to fulfillment of the terms of the treaty. Because of

the flexibility and simplicity of the existing arrangement, the *kawanua*, specifically the *mapalus* groups, encountered no problems.

The Period Between 1680 and 1860

During this period, Minahasans first recognized the cooperative system bound by contract to a party outside the limits of *kawanua* society. This development opened a new phase in the history of *mapalus* in the Minahasa, as the following diagram shows.

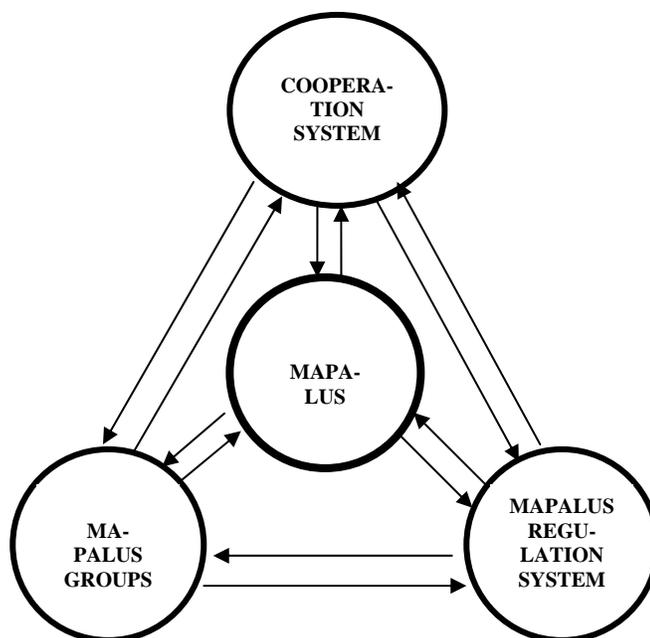


Diagram 2
The Four Elements of *Mapalus* in the Period Antara 1680-1860

Mapalus per se had been a system of mutual cooperation among Minahasan. The elements shown above include this internal, 'closed' cooperation as well as 'open' cooperation with an external party, namely the Dutch. The *kanaramen* and *ta'ar* of Diagram 1 have been absorbed in Diagram 2 into the '*mapalus* regulation system'. The flexibility and simplicity of this system enabled it to permit cooperation with the external agent on the part of the *mapalus* groups.

Between 1679 and 1829, an interval of 150 years, the Minahasans signed treaties with outsiders several times. These included treaties with the VOC, with England, and with the Dutch Indies Government. Almost every treaty stressed the Minahasans' obligation to supply rice. Its provision was accomplished, of course, by means of the *mapalus* system, implemented by *mapalus* groups in the *wanua*. But the Minahasans did not always honour the terms of the treaty. If the opposite party was not honest in fulfilling its own obligation, the Minahasans would reduce or even cease rice deliveries. In this situation it was the *mapalus* groups who actually affected the boycott, exercising an active control over the implementation of cooperation system with the foreign party.

Several developments in this period affected government and economy in the Minahasa, such as the dissolution of the VOC at the end of 1799 and the establishment of the Dutch Indies Government in 1800. In 1824 the Government created the Residency of Manado, covering north and central Celebes (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1971: 45, 156-157), and intervened in the government of the *walak* by making them into administrative districts (Parengkuan, 1985). The *Tu'ah um balak* or *Kapala Walak* who had led the *walak*, became *Kepala Distrik* (*Districthoofd*), a change later formalized by the Governor-General in 1856 (Staatsblad No. 28 of 1856).

Since its introduction by Bastian Enok in 1796, coffee had begun to spread in the Minahasa, so that in 1818, 200 *pikul* of coffee were supplied to the government in addition to the compulsory rice deliveries (Godee Molsbergen, 1928: 184). A political report of 1837 shows that Minahasa produced coffee of excellent quality, better than that of Java (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 1971: 45). Minahasa also exceeded its target for rice deliveries, giving 2,000 *koyang* or 160,000 *gantang* in place of the prescribed 700 in place of the prescribed 700 *koyang* or 56,000 *gantang* (Godee Molsbergen, 1928: 173-174). In 1825, the colonial government then began to introduce a monetary economic system in the Minahasa. Three markets, which had previously operated by barter of goods, began to use money (Parengkuan, 1986; Watuseke, 1968). Encouragement of the use of currency affected the *mapalus* groups, which had previously worked only to produce rice as contracted. In 1851 the first tax regulation was established in the Minahasa. The rice deliveries were superseded by a f. 5,00 head tax, so that the effectiveness of the *mapalus* groups as a

means of fulfilling obligations to the government became less apparent. The colonial government stated that rice deliveries no longer constituted part of a treaty arrangement, but rather an obligatory taxation. This marked the introduction of a formal tax system in 1851. It was decided that the time had come for individuals, instead of the *mapalus* group or *wanua* or *walak*, to be made liable to pay tax.

Besides the abovementioned political and economic changes, developments in the field of transport during this period also needs to be mentioned. Minahasans had traditionally relied entirely on human strength to carry the products from the interior to Manado. Coffee yields under the compulsory cultivation system (*cultuurstelsel*) exceeded the capacity of this type of transport, so that in 1850 carts drawn by animals (locally known as *roda*) supplemented human bearers for the first time in the Minahasa. The growing number of carts traveling to and from Minahasa made the colonial government began a road building work to link the *wanua* and district centers in the Minahasan interior, with the town of Manado. The first networks were constructed in the period 1853-1859. The use of the cart, the construction of road nets and the building of markets, together with the use of horses, stimulated the cash economy based on money in the Minahasa. The liveliness of the cash economy in this period was strongly to influence the *mapalus* system thereafter.

The Period Between 1860 and 1950

In this period, the role of the cash economy became increasingly extensive. Money began to affect the system of mutual cooperation as part of a colonial economy policy deliberately implemented by the government of the time. The use of money in transactions was fundamentally more practical than the old system of bartering goods for goods. The following diagram aims to illustrate the changes which occurred in this period.

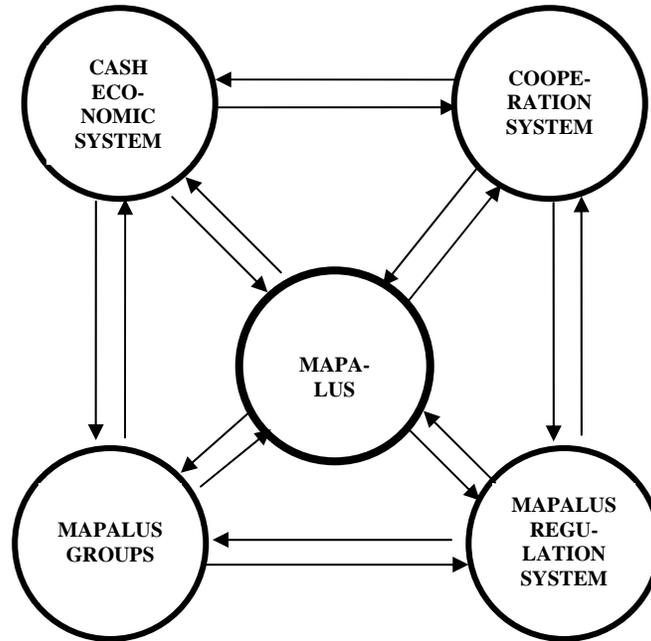


Diagram 3
The Influence of Cash Economy From 1860 Onwards

In this period between 1860 and 1950, *mapalus* was increasingly influenced by the cash economy. The years 1853-1859 was attempted to encourage growth in the number of markets, from those three markets have established --at Manado, Kema, and Tondano (Watusoke, 1968: 43). Since only few responded to this, Resident J.C. Bosch (1859-1862) support the government to intervene in financing the construction of market directly. Construction continued until the end of the 19th century, where there were 47 markets in the Minahasa.

The increasing number of markets can be regarded as an indicator of the economic development in the Minahasa at the time. The Chinese was forbid to operate in the Minahasan interior, and could trade only within the town of Manado. In their place, the colonial government gave its blessing to the '*Borgo*' who had originally been brought to the Minahasa as military auxiliaries. But the *Borgo* did not use this opportunity. This situation made the Minahasans in the interior lacked of middlemen to link them to the economic centre in Manado. The result was that they took the trading initiative themselves.

Peasants by custom, the Minahasans had their own ideas about trade. They divided trade into three types of activity: (a) connecting the *ladang* fields with the nearest market (*tibo-tibo*); (b) linking the markets to each other and the interior to the economic centre of Manado (*pasar ron*); and (c) using the old traditional system of barter in doing trade (*belanté'*) (Parengkuan, 1986). Besides the increasing quantity of circulation money, the increasing number of markets, and the spread of main roads network, the factor that most strongly supported their efforts was the possession of the means of transport known as *roda* mentioned above. Draught animals like horses and cattle bred and multiplied rapidly, while still others were imported from other areas at this time.

The replacement of rice deliveries by taxation during the previous period may be regarded as the first blow to the effectiveness of *mapalus*. The second fell in 1879 with the issue of the agrarian regulation known as the *Domein Verklaring*. According to *adat* law, each *walak* had traditionally controlled its own area of land as a collectivity, private ownership being unknown. All the land was communal property, and was referred to in *adat* law as *tana' kalakeran* or *tana' kakelian*, as Adam states (Adam, 1975 : 33). *Mapalus* groups were free to work it as farmland. But the *Domein Verklaring* declared all ground not explicitly claimed by individuals to be state land. Henceforth, anyone who wished to work it would therefore require the permission of the colonial government. Despite many protests, the colonial government remained stubbornly committed to its implementation.

Towards the end of the 19th century, a decline in production of rice and coffee became evident. The decline in the coffee yield corresponded with the abolition of the *Curtuurstelsel*. To replace it, the colonial government permitted the opening of big coconut plantations which later began to dominate markets at the beginning of the 20th century. But when the world economy went into decline in the 1930s, copra prices and production fell accordingly (Rhijn, 1941). The fall in the price of copra restimulated *mapalus* activity in the Minahasa, with the result that money was scarce but food plentiful. The development of the world economy affected the local economy of the Minahasa. The difficulty to obtain money meant that peasants had no choice but to work their own land. If at the beginning of the period many peasants had been involved in, and had contributed to the growth of, the *tibo-tibo*, *pasar ron* and *belanté'* trade sectors, now they returned to the

agricultural sector in which they had begun. There were still numbered capital owners in the villages, which made them the first exploiters of *mapalus* as hired agricultural labour. Since their activity and success in the commercial sector in the late 19th and early 20th century, they had become reluctant to work their own farmlands themselves.

Minahasan peasants with trade involvements were actually not the first to make instrumental use of *mapalus*. The colonial government had, of course, required much manpower in order to extend the road net over the whole Minahasa and link it with Manado. There were no tractors or bulldozers yet to level hills and fill valleys to make way for this network. Through the medium of the *Hukum Basar* and *Hukum Kadua*, the colonial government requested the help of the *Hukum Tua* in mobilizing the people. The easiest way for the *Hukum Tua* to do this was by using the *mapalus* groups which were always available to work, especially when they were not busy on the land. An example of large-scale mobilization of *mapalus* for road-building in the 19th century occurred during the construction of the road linking Tondano with Airmadidi (V.O. Luntungan, 1986). Such *mapalus* labour constituted part of the corvee (*heerendienst*) system operated by the government.

The economic problems of the Dutch time had not yet subsided when the Minahasa was occupied by Japanese forces. Amidst the economic difficulties of the Japanese period the *mapalus* groups continued to fulfill economic needs in the Minahasan villages. This was also the case when Japan finally surrendered in 1945. Between 1945 and 1950 the economic situation in the area, like the political situation, remained unstable. Nevertheless, *mapalus* groups continued to be of service in meeting the subsistence need of the village population.

The Period Between 1950 and 1970

This period witnessed a development different from that of its predecessor. The differences stemmed from the ending of the colonial order and the beginning of a new organization of social life of independence after the physical revolution of 1945-1950. During the 20 year 1950-1970, a new system of social stratification was established. While the colonials had attempted to create a local class of Minahasan power holders by means of various educational systems and hierarchies (for example the *Hoofden-school*, commonly named 'Sekolah Radja' or

'Radja School', at Tondano), there now occurred a process of democratization of the educational system as well as the economy, the government, and so forth. This process, however, did not occur without the excesses described by Koentjaraningrat as the un-checked ascendancy of a mentality which devalues quality, hunts for shortcuts, knows no true discipline and neglects responsibilities (Koentjaraningrat, 1977: 50).

Amidst these developments, new groupings arose within Minahasan society, both endogenous and deriving from the national level or from outside the Minahasa. Within the Minahasa itself, old social organizations were reorganized or reformed. All sorts of family-based associations appeared, large and small, and social organizations based upon territory and religion came, into existence. From outside the Minahasa, central government personnel introduced new concepts in economic life and agriculture. As a result of such influences, various activities appeared which imitated *mapalus* or used it as a model, and which were referred to as *mapalus* themselves. The following diagram illustrates this development.

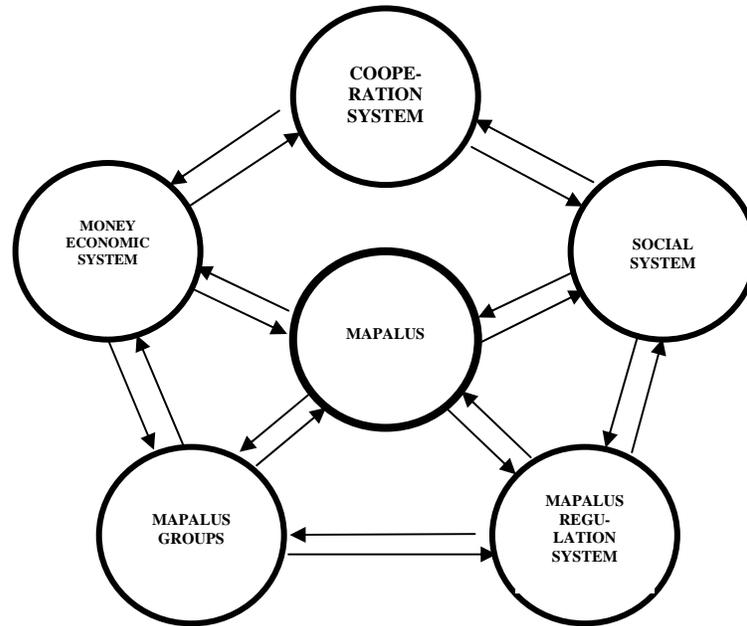


Diagram 4
Influence of the Social System Upon *Mapalus* from 1950³

Mapalus, which originally comprised only three elements, has now doubled in complexity with the addition of the cash economy, the cooperation system, and the social system. Variation and diversification in the concept and organization of *mapalus* seems to be associated with the increasing strength of the cash economy and of the other two non-original elements. The increasing availability of employment opportunities for rural-urban migrants caused a growing shortage of manpower in the Minahasan village agricultural sector. It was probably in this period that the expression *tumedano wia sé mapalus* came into use in Tonsea. It means: to work your land, just hire a *mapalus* group. The people of Tondano also say *tumelesou sé mapalus* or *wéarola sé mapalus*: have a paid *mapalus* group do some or all of the farm work. Increasingly scarcity of agricultural labour and an increasingly lively

³ This diagram is intended to portray the situation from 1960 onwards, but I have retained 1950 as the period boundary after consultation with a colleague.

urban commercial sector undoubtedly from the background to these changes.

The Period from 1970 Onwards

As we know, the government and people of Indonesia cooperated to institute a series of five years plans (PELITA) beginning on 1 April 1969; the first PELITA ran from 1969 to 1974. From the beginning, it was a good intention of mobilizing the village community's own capacity to build the infrastructure and facilities it needs. The government help available to this end was called the *Subsidi Desa* (Village Subsidy), later renamed as *Bantuan Desa* (Village Assistance) and abbreviated *BANDES*. This package of cash help was not sufficient in itself to finance any of the recommended projects, was freely admitted; rather, the package was intended to stimulate the spontaneous participation of the people of the village concerned. The construction of infrastructure and facilities was generally intended to involve the whole population of the village. To encourage such participation, the government made effective use of themes derived from the *mapalus* system. The entry of the political system into *mapalus* is portrayed in the following diagram.

Diagram 5 shows the role of the political system at both national and local levels in exploiting *mapalus* for purposes of national and local development. The political system was able without difficulty to make use of *mapalus* themes, and indeed its efforts were warmly received by the *mapalus* groups themselves. That this was possible has to do with the concept of *mapalus* itself as well as with the will of village people to build a better future for them. When a government figure shouts the slogan 'mapalus spirit', the people of the Minahasa will immediately understand and absorb his meaning. The concept of *mapalus* is always open to innovation, and if effectively channeled it is capable of mobilizing and directing people in support of programs pursued by the government or useful to villagers.

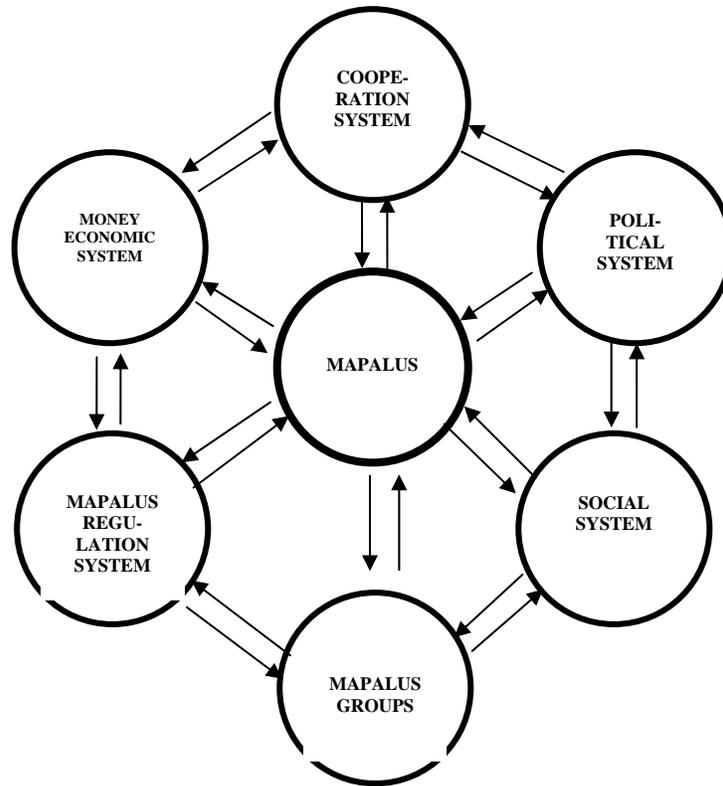


Diagram 5
The Political System Begins to Affect *Mapalus* From 1970

Conclusion

The time has come to attempt to extract some conclusions from the foregoing analysis:

1. *Mapalus* as it exists among Minahasans has always formed an essential part of that society.
2. *Mapalus* is not a rigid concept, but always ready to receive and incorporate external stimulants to change, even when they alter the original notion as rooted in traditional agriculture.

3. Economic changes have caused variations in the practice of *mapalus*, the money economic being alien to *mapalus* in its original form.
4. The *mapalus* concept can also be used to strengthen the solidarity of kinship and social organizations.
5. The concept of *mapalus* can be used with effect to support development both at a national level and locally in the Minahasa.

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