An ethnoarchaeological study of feasting in Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

Recent literature suggests that feasting played a major role in such developments as the emergence of socioeconomic inequalities, the creation and utilization of political power, and the evolution of prestige technologies in prehistoric societies. Ethnoarchaeological studies of feasting in traditional societies have the potential to shed light on how feasting is related to these and other sociopolitical issues and how it can be identified archaeologically. This article presents the results of an ethnoarchaeological case study of traditional feasting in Kanan, Indonesia. An analysis of feasting-related material culture in Kanan demonstrates that the material manifestations of feasting can be attributed to a number of factors: the types of feasts held (solidarity or promotional), the scale of the feast, the materials used to prepare and serve food, and the types of foods consumed (e.g., domesticated animals vs. wild game). Additionally, this study shows that ecological conditions have a significant effect on the types of feasts that are held in a society and on the feasting behavior of individual households.

Keywords: Ethnoarchaeology; Indonesia; Feasting; Social complexity

Feasts entail considerable investments of time, labor, and resources. In traditional societies, feasts can represent the primary occasions at which labor is mobilized, sociopolitical power is enhanced, and valuable relationships are established and solidified. Consequently, a large feast often involves a greater investment of surplus produce than any other undertaking in traditional societies. What may appear to be lavish “give-aways” of food and drink are actually, in large part, carefully calculated expenditures through which practical sociopolitical strategies are pursued. As Hayden (2001, 27) states, “Feasting and gift giving are probably the principal means for transforming surpluses in order to improve chances of survival and reproduction.”

However, I am not arguing that feasts are entirely political or that they are the only events at which important sociopolitical strategies can be pursued. Moreover, there is certainly a symbolic importance to these events (they are typically associated with such things as funerary rites or fertility rites), and there are definitely sincere bonds of friendship and family that are renewed at feasts. Nevertheless, the focus in this paper is on how feasts, in addition to their symbolic and psychological importance, do provide venues (the primary venues in Kanan) at which a variety of sociopolitical strategies can be pursued by individuals and groups.

The role feasts can play in enhancing sociopolitical power and prestige has been illustrated in the anthropological and archaeological literature. In Indonesian societies, for example, Hoskins (1984) described how status and power in West Sumba could be achieved through feasting, and Volkman (1985) noted a similar pattern in the Mt. Sesean area of north-central Tana Toraja (not far from the area focused on in this paper). Feasting in Papua New Guinea has traditionally been

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associated with such strategies as forming alliances, controlling the flow of wealth, establishing social inequalities, manipulating social norms, and mobilizing labor (Wiessner, 2001, p. 117–123). In African contexts, Dietler (2001, p. 68, 69, 78) has noted that feasts are not only occasions at which the respect and prestige required for exerting political leadership can be acquired, but also a means by which social relations and networks can be created and maintained. Clarke (1998, 2001) also illustrated the importance of social bonds and networks that are maintained through feasting. Among the Akha of northern Thailand, he noted that the relations established and enhanced in the contexts of traditional feasts served to create safety nets that could be relied upon in times of social, political, or economic hardships.

I addressed similar sociopolitical issues in my ethnoarchaeological investigation of feasting in Kanan. The potential socioeconomic maneuvering that occurs at Kanan feasts was examined by collecting data on household economic, social, and political standing and comparing these data to household feasting participation. I also explored the debt relationships that are built up through feasting by inquiring about informants’ previous feast expenditures and debts. In addition, the range of traditional feasts that are held in Kanan and their potential sociopolitical function were ascertained by attending rituals and feasts (in Kanan and other parts of Tana Toraja) and interviewing informants concerning details of the traditional feasts performed in the area.

In terms of material culture, the archaeological signatures of feasting in Kanan were analyzed in order to determine whether household feasting behavior was reflected in the ownership of feasting material culture. The relationship between feasting and material culture has received little attention in ethnoarchaeological studies.

In one of the very limited number of works dealing with the subject, Michael Clarke (1998, 2001) was able to demonstrate a relatively strong link between household feasting material culture and feasting behavior among the Akha. The material culture analyses presented in this article exhibit some different results that, when compared to the Akha data, expand our understanding of how feasting shapes a society’s material culture.

Study area

My research was carried out in a remote Torajan village named Kanan. Kanan is located in the southwestern part of Tana Toraja (Torajaland) in the southwestern highlands of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi (Figs. 1–3). As in other parts of Southeast Asia, traditional feasting is very prevalent in Tana Toraja, where there are numerous occasions accompanied by feasts, such as weddings, funerals, and new house constructions. Today, with the integration into modern economies and transport networks, certain feasts, such as large funerals, can attract thousands of guests and entail the slaughter of large numbers of domesticated animals as well as the construction of temporary shelters to house guests (see Ames, 1998; Volkman, 1985). However, some areas within Tana Toraja, such as Kanan, are relatively isolated locales, where modern influences have left relatively little impact on the traditional feasting system.

The antiquity of the feasting system and other elements of the distinctly “Torajan” cultural pattern in Tana Toraja is not clear. There are archaeological indications that the island of Sulawesi has been inhabited by Austronesian-speaking rice agriculturalists (ancestors...

The village (tondok) of Kanan, where the bulk of the data presented and discussed in this article was collected, has a population of about 170 (a number that could arguably be over 200, if one considers family members that live in other areas while still being somewhat tied to their natal households by sending money and participating in rituals) and is located in the district of Simbuang in the highlands of southwestern Tana Toraja (Ames, 1998, p. 218; Hayden, 2000, n.d.; Nooy-Palm, 1979, pp. 319, 320; Waterson, 2000, pp. 182–183).

The basic socioeconomic unit in Kanan is the household, usually occupied by a nuclear family, sometimes together with parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, or a married child's family. Lineages are absent or region for wet rice agriculture (the primary subsistence crop of Tana Toraja) in relation to most other parts of Tana Toraja (Badan Pusat Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Tana Toraja, 1998). In fact, rice harvests typically fall well short of the amount required for households to fulfill their yearly subsistence needs and social obligations (e.g., feasts—Sandarupa, 2001, p. 5). Consequently, surpluses are minor and the cultivation of maize, cassava, and other swidden crops is more prominent in Simbuang than in other areas. Simbuang is also relatively isolated due largely to the lack (as of July, 2001) of any good roads linking Simbuang with other parts of Tana Toraja or other parts of Sulawesi. This isolation has left Simbuang less influenced by the modern world and cash economy in comparison to central Tana Toraja.

The basic socioeconomic unit in Kanan is the household, usually occupied by a nuclear family, sometimes together with parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, or a married child's family. Lineages are absent or
weak, and in fact, there is no system of lineage or clan names. Only first names are recognized. Relationships between households are structured according to close kin, affinal, and common interest considerations.

Traditionally (before the Indonesian administration of Tana Toraja began and before the Dutch imposed their administrative system over the area at the beginning of the 20th century), Simbuang appears to have been organized into loose confederations of villages, known as lembang (district), that were united primarily on ritual feasting occasions and for defense. According to some authors (Lanting, 1926; Nooy-Palm, 1979; Tandilangi, 1968), there were six lembang in Simbuang: Lindangan, Makodo, Mappak, Panangan, Sima, and Simbuang. All six of the lembang comprising the traditional district of Simbuang were administered by a principle chief known as the ma'dika according to Nooy-Palm (1979, p. 65). Such a system of supra-village political authority coincides with the general pattern associated with chieftdoms, which, at their basic level, have at least one tier of political hierarchy above the village (see Earle, 1978, 1991; Johnson and Earle, 1987; Wright, 1984).

However, the sociopolitical order described above apparently did not exist in all parts of Simbuang. The tondok (village) of Kanan, together with the neighboring tondok's of Balatana, Buangin, Katimbangan, Pong Bembe, and Tanete, traditionally formed a segment or subdistrict of a larger lembang (district) encompassing all of Simbuang (Lembang Simbuang). The Kanan subdistrict of Lembang Simbuang made up the northern section of the lembang. Unlike the case for other parts of Simbuang, where there existed a three-tiered class system, everyone residing in the Kanan subdistrict claimed membership within the same social class (ma'dika or high noble). In spite of this more egalitarian social ranking, there were disparities in wealth and sociopolitical influence among Kanan households.

Politically, the villages in the Kanan subdistrict were each headed by an ambe' tondok (father of the village or village head). Within each village, there was also an ambe' lembang (father of the lembang), who represented the village in affairs concerning the entire subdistrict. Collectively, the ambe' of each village were responsible for resolving disputes between villages and organizing the defense of the lembang subdistrict. Defense, in particular, appears to have been a concern in the area. There was a history of groups raiding Kanan and surrounding areas for coffee from coastal Sulawesi up into the second half of the 20th century, and Kanan as well as other, nearby villages were previously surrounded by walls made of trees for defense (up until 1990 around the nearby village of Pongbembe' when the last attacks occurred). Many of the larger and more complex polities of central Tana Toraja appear to have emerged largely

![Fig. 3. Kanan houses.](image-url)

In the village of Kanan, the ambe' lembang was also the ambe' tondok, and both the position of ambe' tondok and ambe' lembang were typically inherited by the eldest son. There are, however, indications that when there was no proper heir for the position, or an heir without the talent to assume the role of ambe' tondok or ambe' lembang, a more distinctly related (or perhaps unrelated) aspiring individual could become ambe' tondok or ambe' lembang. In addition, the ambe' tondok and ambe' lembang of Kanan appears to have been the dominant traditional political figure of the entire subdistrict, and Kanan was the habitual location of periodic inter-village feasts (see section on Kanan feasts below). However, there was no single formally designated 'paramount' ambe' lembang with authority over the other ambe' lembang of the subdistrict or in any other part of Lembang Simbuang (Sandarupa, 2001, pp. 7–12).

Within this relatively loose supra-village administrative framework, one of the primary means (the other being large feasts—see section on Kanan feasts below) of integrating the various villages of the Kanan subdistrict was through cooperative labor projects. The collective labor force of each tondok and the entire subdistrict was coordinated for labor arrangements known as sisaro. At the village level, the sisaro sang tondok was a system for which the cooperative labor of a village was mobilized when a household needed assistance with such things as irrigation and moving rocks from a paddy field. In these instances, the household in need of the extra labor would be required to provide food for those working (i.e., work feasts—see below). All of the households in the tondok participated in the sisaro sang tondok, and refusal to partake in the arrangement could result in having one's rice harvested and kept by all other households of the tondok.

At the subdistrict level, a similar arrangement encompassing all villages in the subdistrict (the sisaro sang lembang) functioned to organize labor for larger-scale projects, such as road building or irrigation repair. The sisaro sang lembang was also a means by which labor could be organized for large feasts. For example, when there was a funeral requiring the construction of temporary bamboo framed structures in a tondok within the subdistrict, individuals from other tondok would provide labor for the task.

The workforce for both the sisaro sang tondok and the sisaro sang lembang was organized by the to parenngge' village of each tondok. Traditionally, there was one to parenngge' village in each tondok who was theoretically elected by all households within the village. The to parenngge' tondok of Kanan was also the ambe' tondok (father of the village or village head) and ambe' lembang (father of the lembang). Thus, in Kanan, with the formal seats of political authority and authority over village labor essentially being held by one person, political power was clearly centralized. However, it appears as though others could exert some influence in political affairs and that these various roles might be assumed by different people in other villages or at other times in Kanan. For instance, one individual, who was not a close relative of the ambe' tondok of Kanan, evidently consulted with the ambe' tondok in dispute resolution and other matters.

Returning to the topic of societal classification, there was clearly a considerable degree of integration beyond the village level in terms of labor arrangements, rituals (see section on Kanan feasts below), and defense among the confederated villages making up the Kanan subdistrict. In this sense, Kanan and its neighbors could not really be considered autonomous villages, however, this confederation does not fit the traditional profile of a simple chiefdom. The lack of a fixed position of supra-village political authority (i.e., paramount chief) and social ranking (although the hereditary positions of ambe' tondok and ambe' lembang could be seen as comprising a separate social rank) would appear to preclude the Kanan subdistrict from being considered a chiefdom in a rigid sense of the word (see Earle, 1978, 1991; Johnson and Earle, 1987; Wright, 1984). Nor was there any evident settlement hierarchy in terms of size, specialization, complexity, or monumental architecture. In spite of this, Kanan and the other villages of the subdistrict were culturally, ritually, and politically (in times of warfare) linked to socially stratified village confederations of the surrounding area in the past and were perhaps part of a proto-chiefdom of sorts.

In any case, the details of classification are not critical to the central focus of this study. It is more important to note that in the face of a rather loose supra-village administrative framework, feasting was a primary means of integrating the population in the area around Kanan. In the discussion of Kanan feasts that follows, I consider the ways in which feasts bind households together within and between villages and how, through feasting, individuals can establish relations that have practical advantages.

Feasting categories

For the purposes of this article, a feast is defined as a meal that is shared by two or more individuals in a ceremonial or other non-routine context (such as receiving a guest from afar). A feast is also differentiated from more common meals by the food that is served and eaten. Throughout Tana Toraja, there are certain foods traditionally reserved for feasting occasions, the most recognizable of which are water buffaloes, pigs, and chickens (Hayden, 2000, n.d.; Nooy-Palm, 1979, p. 11). Dog meat is also eaten at some feasts and there are no
indications that dogs or any other domesticated animals are killed and eaten outside of feasting contexts. Rice is a common feature at feasts as well and although its consumption is not restricted to feasting occasions, it is likely that only land-owning nobles (in the areas of Tana Toraja where there is a traditional system of social classes) ate rice on a regular basis in the past. In Kanan, there are special varieties of rice that are eaten on the occasion of certain feasts, such as black rice (pare' ambo), special sticky rice (pare' ba'tun), and yellow rice. Additionally, rice flour, along with sugar, is used to make small, biscuit-like cakes known as dipatori, which are served at wedding-related feasts.

Feasting is commonly used as part of sociopolitical strategies pursued by individuals and groups. Categorization of feasts from this perspective has been proposed for African contexts by Dietler (2001) and by Wiessner (2001) in Papua New Guinea. Hayden (1995, 2001) has examined the issue cross-culturally and formulated a variety of feasting categories based on the practical socioeconomic function of the feast (e.g., alliance formation, economic gain through loans and debts, and solidarity). The purpose of these classification schemes is to facilitate the examination of the practical social aspects of feasting rather than to obscure their symbolic importance. Throughout Tana Toraja, for example, one can point out a dichotomy between rituals symbolically associated with life (e.g., fertility, curing, and childbirth) and those with death (funerals and associated funerary rites). However, there are also real costs in terms of animals, human labor, and rice that are expended for these events, and these costs and debts provide important insights into the practical role of the feasts. Significantly, the debts associated with particular feasts are remembered for very long periods of time (feasting debts are inherited until they have been paid-off in Tana Toraja). Furthermore, informants in the area asserted that feasts were a very important means of maintaining good relations. I was told specifically that maintaining close relations could be beneficial for such things as borrowing rice, cash, or assisting with house building. The present analysis of Kanan feasts is focused on how feasting is related to these and other kinds of practical social, political, and economic benefits.

While such benefits can be obtained in a number of ways, in Kanan, there appear to be three primary social strategies tied to feasting: solidarity, promotion, and labor attraction. Some feasts are closely associated with only one of these strategies. For example, a feast that is given to feed workers building a house can largely be seen as an event held to attract and compensate for labor (i.e., a work feast). However, many Kanan feasts may emphasize one strategy, while bearing characteristics that correspond with other practical strategies and I note this, where appropriate, in the following analysis. Therefore, the categories (such as solidarity, promotion, and work feasts) I list below should be considered fluid as opposed to a hard-and-fast pigeonholing of feasts.

Solidarity feasts

Feasts that serve to reinforce group solidarity are the most commonly performed feasts in Kanan. Solidarity feasts in Kanan are typically potluck events at which the unity and solidarity of individual households, villages, or the entire subdistrict (allied group of villages) is reinforced. Although some of these feasts can be relatively large, they are distinguished from large promotional feasts by the fact that the animals and rice served at solidarity feasts represent a communal pooling of resources from a number of different houses. Instead of one household or sponsoring group hosting a large feast and providing the bulk of the pigs and water buffaloes for the feast (as is typically the case for large promotional feasts—see below), the pigs, rice, and chickens served at solidarity feasts are provided by many different households and groups of households, often with theoretically equal contributions coming from each household. Additionally, there is less emphasis on prestige item or food display at solidarity feasts in comparison to more promotional feasts. At the lower end of the size scale, it might be argued that all household meals serve solidarity functions. This is probably true, but special household meals (like Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner) serve to emphasize household solidarity periodically to an even greater extent.

Promotional feasts

Promotional feasts in Kanan are defined as feasts that involve a large number of attendees, copious amounts of food (especially expensive prestige foods, such as rice and the meat of domestic animals, primarily provided by the household hosting the event), the display of prestige items, and an apparent attempt on the part of the host to promote economic success. The display and promotion of success on the part of the major sponsors/hosts of promotional feasts cross-culturally is typically geared to favor important socioeconomic relationships, such as with potential marriage partners and their families, sociopolitical supporters, and laborers (see Hayden, 2001). The location of the event at the host household or representative household of the primary sponsoring group and the large amounts and value of food provided by one household or group in comparison to others are the main elements that differentiate these kinds of feasts from solidarity feasts in Kanan, although there are certainly solidarity-enhancing characteristics found in what I term promotional feasts. In addition, promotional feasts can be differentiated from solidarity feasts in the reciprocal debt relationships with key figures that are created at these feasts.
Work feasts

In the context of some Kanan feasts, particularly those related to house construction (see below), labor is recruited and compensated. These gatherings are characteristic of a type of feast that Hayden (2001, p. 241) have labeled “work feasts.” Work feasts are events at which people provide labor for a project lasting at least one day in return for food and drink furnished by the feast host. Work feasts are typical of agrarian societies and used in situations where a large work group is required (beyond what can be provided by a single household), such as house construction or road building (Dietler and Herbich, 2001, pp. 244, 246). Dietler and Herbich (2001, p. 246) note that in addition to attracting labor, work feasts function as a means for household promotion through the hosting of a large feast. This characterization is fairly consistent with work feasts in Kanan, although not all of the Kanan work feasts appear to be promotional (see below section on Kanan House feasts).

Kanan feasts

In terms of the diversity of traditional Kanan feasts, there are numerous feasts performed on a variety of occasions in Kanan. All of these feasts differ in the number of people who typically attend, the duration of the feast, the types and amounts of foods prepared and served at the feast, and the total investment of food and labor that the feast represents. Feasts are traditionally performed for overt purposes such as house building and consecration, weddings, funerals, curing, childbirth, and promoting land fertility. However, these events are also associated with one or more practical concerns of solidarity, promotion, and labor attraction. For clarity of presentation, I will discuss the major types of events for which feasts are held in Kanan and then indicate what benefits each feasting type confers on hosts and participants.

Curing feasts

In the context of the traditional belief system (Aluk To Dolo) of the area, various rites are performed to cure illnesses, alleviate economic hardships, and improve the fertility of rice—all of which are considered to be brought about by spiritual deficiencies and therefore amenable to “curing” via ritual feasting. A feast of some kind is typically associated with these events, which can range in size from the ma’ suru tondok, a fertility feast for rice involving hundreds of individuals from multiple villages to the ma’ pasomba, a very small household rite held to cure a child’s illness. There are at least six other recognized curing feasts that provide hosts with a number of benefits, especially solidarity.

Solidarity aspects of curing feasts

Intuitively and logically it seems more appropriate for curing feasts to be events at which solidarity within and between households or larger social groups is enhanced. This certainly appears to be the case for many of the curing feasts performed in Kanan. For example, the ma’ suru tondok is an event held when there are bad harvests (generally, once every 3–4 years) that is attended by hundreds of people from, theoretically, all of the villages within the Kanan subdistrict. All households are represented at the ma’ suru tondok feast, which is normally held in the village of Kanan, bring rice and sometimes a chicken. In addition, one pig from each village is brought to the feast. These pigs are purchased through a communal pooling of resources from all of the households within each village. The more or less equal food contributions from households and villages indicates that this feast is performed as a solidarity-enhancing event, perhaps to reinforce the alliances and support networks of the Kanan subdistrict. More specifically, the fact that it takes place during a time of economic hardship (i.e., bad rice harvests), suggests that it can help reinforce economic support networks within the subdistrict.

In addition to the large, inter-village ma’ suru tondok, there are the mang ata and ma’ sumorrong sang tondok village-wide curing feasts. The mang ata is held when there is a disease outbreak (e.g., chicken pox) that affects small children. For this feast, at least one chicken is provided by all households with children. The ma’ sumorrong sang tondok is held when there is a time of general misfortune (e.g., bad harvests) in the tondok and involves the communal pooling of resources by all households to purchase a pig that is eaten with rice from each household’s stock. The potluck nature of these feasts is indicative of a function promoting village-wide solidarity.

Promotional aspects of curing feasts

The social aspects of some curing feasts, however, do not appear to be limited to solidarity enhancement. The ma’ suru kale’ feast hosted by individual households provides a good example of how a feast that on the surface appears to be concerned with curing and strengthening the bonds of family and other relations could potentially be used to promote the success of a household. The reasons for holding a ma’ suru kale’ feast can range from curing illness to alleviating economic misfortune. In Kanan, the ma’ suru kale’ feast is rarely performed (there were only two accounts of the feast for the span of 30 years prior to this study) and is quite costly, requiring the slaughter of six pigs and the services of a ritual specialist for a 3 day period. The accounts of this
event indicate that it can be attended by hundreds of people from Kanan and neighboring villages.

There are certainly aspects of the ma' suru kale feast that are reflective of family solidarity. For example, in one of the rites performed for the feast, all family members of the host household have blood from a pig placed on their foreheads. However, the expense required for the feast by the host household and the fact that there is another curing feast of a much smaller scale that can be held for essentially the same reasons (curing illness, misfortune, etc.) indicates that this event is to a large degree promotional. Indeed, the only two households that had performed the event in recent memory were two of the most economically and socially prominent households in Kanan.

**Life cycle feasts**

There are essentially three major feasts held in Kanan to mark important events in an individual's life: ma' kurrui (birth feast), ma' suru bati (feast held on child's first birthday), and weddings.

**Solidarity aspects of life cycle feasts**

Both the ma' kurrui and ma' suru bati are held to ensure the health and well-being of a child. The ma' kurrui is held soon after a child is born and is hosted by the household of the child's parents or grandparents (if the parents have not yet established an independent household). A chicken and pig, provided by the host household, are killed and eaten for the feast. The ma' kurrui is attended by people, who bring rice, from theoretically every household within the village, and a similar feast is said to be performed for newborn water buffaloes. The ma' suru bati feast (child's first birthday) is an event of a similar scale to the ma' kurrui. The ma' suru bati entails the slaughter of three chickens and one small pig provided by the host household. On the second day of this 2-day event, the child's hair is cut in a ritual known as pa kalaran. In addition to their important symbolic value, both the ma' kurrui and ma' suru bati represent opportunities for households to solidify their ties with other households within the village, a measure that would be appropriate for a household that just added a new member. These feasts, particularly the ma' suru bati, may also serve to enhance the prestige of the child, which could be beneficial in terms of attracting desirable mates and associated marriage alliances.

Wedding feasts are also solidarity-reinforcing events that appear to provide the opportunity for some promotion. For weddings, the bride's family traditionally provides two pigs and between 100 and 200 kg of rice for the guests (which can be well over 100 from throughout the area). As in other societies, weddings in Kanan seem organized primarily to foster the alliance between the bride and groom's family. Such affinal relationships are typically heavily emphasized in structuring helping relationships whether for labor, loans, or potential support.

**Promotional aspects of life cycle feasts**

The number of people who typically attend weddings, which can be in the hundreds and often include ambe' tondok's of other villages, and the relatively large amount of food provided by the bride's family is indicative of promotion (particularly when there is variation in the number of guests and the size and quality of the pigs). Weddings are some also of the few events (besides funerals and house feasts) in which households are able to display their socioeconomic standing within the community and region.

**Agricultural cycle feasts**

There is a sequence of three feasts held from just prior to preparing rice fields for planting (manuk apa) to the time rice begins to form grains (ma' belung pare'). For maize, there is only one feast (ma' tuyu dale'), which is performed just prior to planting to ensure successful growth. All of these feasts are considered essential for promoting successful harvests and in the social realm, these feasts provide another means to reinforce the solidarity within and between households in Kanan.

**Solidarity aspects of agricultural feasts**

The smallest of the feasts performed for rice fertility is the mangambo, which takes place in October, just before rice planting begins. Within each household, a separate mangambo feast is held that includes only household members (husband, wife, and children, including married children in some cases). The feast itself is very simple and entails a chicken that is killed and eaten with rice by the family members. The essentially stated purpose of the mangambo feast is to ensure that the rice grows successfully and, socially, it can serve to reinforce the solidarity of the household, particularly when affinal relations are living in the household. The ma' tuyu dale' (held just prior to planting maize as oppose to rice) is basically identical to the mangambo in terms of what is eaten and who attends.

The manuk apa and ma' belung pare' are village-wide rice fertility feasts that each entail a communal pooling of resources among households to purchase pigs (four pigs for the manuk apa and two pigs for the ma' belung pare') that are slaughtered. The pork is eaten with rice provided by all households in what appear to be the main regularly scheduled feasts that primarily serve to promote the solidarity of the tondok as a whole.
House feasts

There are special feasts held at different phases of house construction and after a house has been built. These feasts are typically concerned with household promotion and labor recruitment (when associated with the stages of house construction) and are probably the most overtly promotional of all of the curing or fertility-related feasts.

Promotional aspects of house feasts

The ma' burake' sang banua sequence of feasts performed to drive bad spirits out of a home display the basic elements that characterize promotional feasts at the household level. There are three feasts making up the ma' burake' sang banua: ma' rambaki, burake' putundara, and mangnisi kalla. The three feasts can be held years apart, are attended by hundreds of individuals from both within and outside of the host household's village, and involve the consumption of hundreds of chickens, hundreds of kilograms of rice, and one or more pigs. The household hosting the Ma' burake' sang banua feasts provides the pigs and the largest contribution of chickens and rice for each feast. Special dances with regalia (e.g., ceremonial shields and armor, wooden water buffalo horns, and drums) and drumming (with water buffalo skin drums) also occur at these feasts and at the conclusion of the final feast of the sequence (mangnisi kalla), a special ritual basket is placed inside the house. This ritual basket is said to elevate the prestige of the household, pointing to a household promotional function of this feast.

Solidarity aspects of house feasts

In each of the major feasts of the ma' burake sang banua, all households represented reportedly contribute one chicken for the feast. This potluck aspect of the feast makes the ma' burake' sang banua the largest and most overtly communal feast held at the household level in Kanan, suggesting that, in addition to household promotion, the performance of the ma' burake' sang banua is concerned with enhancing the bonds between the host household and its extended network of supporters from within Kanan and other villages as well.

Household work feasts

The feasts held in the course of house construction serve primarily as a means through which to attract labor and accurately fit the depiction of work feast. The mang papa banua is held when a new roof is constructed on a house and is perhaps the best example of a work feast in Kanan. On the occasion of a mang papa banua feast, the owner of the house provides at least one pig (there were one to four pigs provided at recent mang papa banua feasts in Kanan) as well as a large amount of rice (from 50 to 200 kg for recent mang papa banua feasts in Kanan). The number of people who attended these feasts in Kanan in the past ranged from about 100 to 300. The mang papa banua is typically attended by individuals who build the roof as well as other Kanan residents and relatives of the host household from nearby villages. People who attend the feast without working usually bring rice (about 1 kg per guest) and everyone who attends theoretically receives a share of meat and rice.

The practical purpose for holding a feast such as the mang papa banua appears primarily to be labor recruitment. In Tana Toraja, it is quite common to hold a feast in order to compensate for labor. Roof construction requires labor from outside of the household and in order to ensure that one can attract enough people to help build a roof, a feast of some sort appears to be necessary. The notion that the mang papa banua is a work recruitment feast is supported by the fact that those who worked did not bring rice to the feasts. An element of promotion is inherent in these feasts as well. At previous mang papa banua feasts held in Kanan, there was variation in the number of pigs provided by households who had hosted the feasts, indicating that the mang papa banua represents an opportunity for a household to promote their success by slaughtering valuable livestock.

Aside from the mang papa banua, feasts occurring in the process of house erection in Kanan evidently do not involve a feast of large size and formality, although there is typically meat (chicken, pigs, or possibly dogs) and rice provided by the owner of the house for the workers who build a house. Such small-scale work feasts appear to occur at all stages of house construction. For example, there was one case recorded in which an individual contracted two men from another village to construct the wooden board walls for his house. The two men were each compensated with a pig and food for every day they worked to build the walls. Such work feasts are more purely work recruitment feasts as the provisioning of a lunch for a small number of individuals would appear to have a limited promotional effect.

Funerals

Funerals are the largest and most clearly promotional of all Kanan feasts in terms of the number of animals that are slaughtered, the number of guests who attend (which can be more than 1000), and the duration. There are a variety of funerals traditionally performed in Kanan that differ in their time span and the number of water buffaloes and pigs that are slaughtered for the feast, ranging from the simplest funeral, for which one water buffalo and one pig are killed and eaten on a single day, to the aluk sukku, which lasts more than 27 nights and entails the slaughter of at least 16 water buffaloes and more than 36 pigs. The aluk sukku represents an
enormous cost for Kanan households (about $67,000 USD for the livestock alone—based on year 2000 cash estimates).

An important feature of funerals is the debt relationships that are created and maintained when guests bring livestock for the primary organizers/sponsors of the funeral (close family members of the deceased who organize the funeral). This giving of livestock binds the receiver of the ‘gift’ in a reciprocal relationship which obligates the receiver to repay the giver in kind at a later feast (i.e., when the giver organizes a funeral for a deceased relative). Because of these debt relationships, the provisioning of food for a funeral feast is much more complex than that for other feasts. In addition to the pigs and water buffaloes that are provided by the primary sponsors of a funeral, there are also pigs and, occasionally, water buffaloes brought by more distant relatives, affines, and others that represent gifts for the individuals in charge of organizing the funeral. These gifts serve to enhance the relationship between the giver and receiver, which not only entails return gifts but also leads to expectations of support in matters such as house building, dispute resolution, or borrowing rice or cash in times of need.

Promotional aspects of funerals

The size and lavishness of Kanan funerals are certainly indicative of their promotional nature. In Kanan, any feast entailing the slaughter of a water buffalo (which only occurs at funerals) can be considered a great investment and characteristic of a promotional feast. Moreover, the extravagance of funerals is not limited to these impressive displays of livestock. Prestige items, such as special headdresses that adorn the deceased and sacred ancestral cloths, are displayed and temporary bamboo structures are built to accommodate guests at large funerals. The services of a ritual practitioner (to mebalun) are also required for the various rites of the funeral. The promotional aspect of funerals is also reflected in the water buffalo horns that adorn the exterior of houses in Kanan, representing household contributions of water buffaloes at past funeral feasts (Fig. 4). At the same time, the most elaborate funeral, the aluk sukku, for which 16 water buffaloes and more than 36 pigs are customarily slaughtered had been performed only twice in roughly 87 years prior to collecting the data for this study (February–March 2000). In addition, there are many small subsidiary rituals associated with Kanan funerals, indicating that the enhancement of the bonds between the close family members of the deceased person is also a major concern at these events. However, it is also advantageous for kin groups to attract mates, form alliances, and establish debt relationships with other groups or families within their kin network to broaden their socioeconomic support network in the

Fig. 4. Water buffalo horns adorning the exterior of Torajan houses.
conditions of limited agricultural production and limited access to cash resources that exist in Kanan. This is similar to what Clarke (1998, 2001) found among the Akha of northern Thailand, where surplus production was very limited and feasts generally operated, in part, to create and maintain “safety nets” that could be called upon for support in times of economic or political hardship.

Summary
Funerals clearly provide a venue at which to advertise the success of households and kin groups. The grand scale of these feasts in terms of the domesticated animals that are slaughtered and the prestige items that are displayed attests to this element of promotion, which is undoubtedly beneficial in attracting allies, enhancing one’s support network, and attracting mates. Additionally, there are some obvious solidarity-enhancing aspects of promotional feasts in Kanan. In particular, many of the subsidiary/auxiliary feasts associated with Kanan funerals can be considered small solidarity feasts for the funeral’s primary sponsoring kin group, due to the small scale of these feasts and the fact that only close relatives are typically in attendance. The debt relationships that are established and maintained in the context of funerals add another component to funeral feasts in which the solicitation of debt relationships is a major focus for those who bring livestock as gifts for the funeral organizers (Fig. 5).

Discussion of Kanan feasts
Among the wide array of feasts held in Kanan, the most common sociopolitical strategy associated with

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Fig. 5. Torajan funeral feast debt schematic.
these events appears to be solidarity-enhancement. Even in the most promotional of the Kanan feasts, funerals, there is an element of solidarity that permeates many of the rituals. Not only does this pattern coincide with informants’ own conception of why people expend energy into feasting (largely to maintain good relations), solidarity-focused feasting also has practical advantages when one considers the sociopolitical context of Kanan and the neighboring villages. Until recently, defense was a concern for Kanan and surrounding villages, and the inter-village solidarity feasts allowed for the maintenance and enhancement of defensive alliances between villages that were necessary due to periodic raiding. The relations of support established within and between groups at these feasts is certainly also encouraged by the unfavorable agricultural conditions and limited cash resources of the area. However, promotional feasts, like funerals, are also adapted to and are advantageous under these conditions as they give households and groups of households the opportunity, when sufficient surpluses are available, to attract and establish alliances and support networks through hosting large feasts and engaging in the associated feast debt relationships.

Analysis of Kanan households

The second aspect of this study was an analysis of Kanan households consisting of two primary goals: (1) to determine how household feasting participation was related to the ownership of feasting-related material culture and (2) to determine how household feasting investment was related to household economic standing. The bulk of the data presented and analyzed in this paper was collected during a survey of Kanan households undertaken in February and March of 2000. Each household head was asked a series of questions related to feasting behavior and household economics. In addition, material culture inventories related to feasting and economics were taken from all Kanan households. All 30 of the active households in Kanan willingly participated in these interviews and material culture inventories, providing a 100% coverage.

Household material culture

At least one other analysis of household feasting material culture and feasting behavior has been undertaken in another culture. Clarke (1998, 2001) found that the Akha households that feasted the most also possessed the largest pots and woks. The data presented here illustrate a similar pattern, although the link between material culture and feasting behavior is not nearly as strong in Kanan as in the Akha case, indicating that a number of other variables can affect household ownership of feasting material culture.

In Kanan, a variety of items related to feasting were identified and include objects used on a more or less daily basis, such as plates, cups, pots, woks, and bowls, in addition to those used primarily in feasting contexts, such as pedesteled wood serving vessels (kandian dulang), ceremonial war helmets (rungan), and doke' ceremonial spears (iron tip with wooden shaft). Households that owned an abundance of “everyday” kitchen items, such as cups, plates, pots, and woks (i.e., beyond what was necessary given the size of the household), were hypothesized to be the households that hosted the most feasts, as the excess food preparation and food serving items could logically have been used to prepare and serve food for people from other households at feasts. This notion was confirmed in household interviews. As well, households that owned more objects used strictly for feasts were expected to have hosted more feasts than households that owned fewer of these items.

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between material culture and feasting, the ownership of household feasting material culture was compared to the degree to which households reported hosting feasts. Counts of the number of plates, cups, woks, pots, and other items used at feasts were compared to the number of feasts hosted by households in the past 10 years. Because some household feasts tended to be very simple (e.g., often involving only one chicken and immediate household members), the number of plates, cups, woks, pedesteled serving vessels, etc. owned by households was also compared to the number of large feasts hosted by households (feasts at which 100 or more people attended). A further distinction of feast size was made based on the most expensive animal provided by the household hosting the feast, with the highest grade feast (Grade 1 feasts) being those at which the most expensive animal provided by the host was a water buffalo followed by Grade 2 feasts (feasts at which the most expensive animal provided by the host was a pig), and Grade 3 feasts (feasts at which the most expensive animal provided by the host was a chicken). In all of the comparisons, it was expected that households which hosted the most feasts (especially large feasts) also would have been the households that owned the most items related to feasting.

Contrary to expectations, most of the comparisons did not show strong positive correlations between the ownership of feasting-related material culture and the degree to which households invested in feast hosting. In particular, there was only a very weak positive correlation between the number of both plates and cups owned and the number of feasts (including the number of large feasts) hosted by households in the past 10 years (Figs. 6–9). Moreover, \( \chi^2 \) tests (.05 level of significance) indicated that there was not a significant difference between the number of plates and cups owned by households that invested the most in hosting feasts compared to other
Fig. 6. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of feasts hosted by households in the past 10 years and the number of plates owned by households.

Fig. 7. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of large feasts (100+ guests) hosted by households in the past 10 years and the number of plates owned by households.
Fig. 8. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of feasts hosted by households in the past 10 years and the number of cups owned by households.

Fig. 9. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of large feasts (100+ guests) hosted by households in the past 10 years and the number of cups owned by households.
households. This is a surprising result considering that large amounts of plates and cups are typically required at large feasts. There were even weaker correlations between the ownership of traditional earthenware pots (*kurin tana*) and feast hosting. However, comparisons of household feast hosting to the ownership of woks (Fig. 10) in addition to the ownership of *kandian dulang* pedestal wooden bowls (Fig. 11) did yield stronger positive correlations. These results are particularly encouraging, as both woks and *kandian dulang*s appeared to have primarily been used on feasting occasions. In the case of *kandian dulang*s, these items also represented one of the very few traditional prestige items in the village.

The overall lack of strong positive correlations between between material culture and feasting in Kanan can probably be attributed to a number of conditions. Considering that plates and cups must be purchased, participation in the cash economy is a likely factor determining their presence in households. A comparison of cash resources (from the sale of coffee and cash contributions from relatives) and the ownership of plates and cups indicated that there was a positive relationship between the yearly potential cash income of households and their ownership of plates and cups. Prior to these cash influences, serving plates and cups would primarily have been made of banana leaves and bamboo segments as they are still used for feasts in the more traditional and remote areas of Tana Toraja, including Simbuang in some cases. A continued adherence to the use of these perishable materials for feasts could also be a factor in explaining why the ownership of plates and cups does not correlate very well with feast hosting in Kanan, although this certainly does not explain why the ownership of traditional earthenware cooking pots also does not correlate well with feast hosting.

The relative infrequent hosting of large household feasts that required large numbers of plates, cups, and other items can perhaps best account for the lack of a strong relationship between household feast-hosting and household feasting material culture. There were more households that had hosted less than three feasts involving the slaughter of a pig or water buffalo in Kanan in the past 10 years than households that had hosted more than three of these large feasts (Fig. 12). The frequent hosting of large feasts would presumably entail an investment in the large numbers of plates and cups required for hosting large feasts. In Kanan, where the hosting of large feasts is infrequent, it would have been perhaps more sensible to borrow the plates and cups used at feasts. Moreover, when inquiring about the

![Fig. 10. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of feasts hosted by households in the past 10 years and the cumulative diameter of all woks (cm) owned by households.](image-url)
plates and cups households used for feasts, some informants claimed that all attendees brought plates to feasts, implying that it was not necessary for households to own large numbers of plates, cups, and perhaps other items (e.g., earthenware pots) in order to host large feasts.

Of course, it is also possible that informant biases and poor reporting accuracy could account for some of
the weak correlations between feast hosting and the ownership of plates and cups. Some informants admitted having trouble remembering all feasts hosted in the past 10 years and may have omitted some unintentionally over the course of an interview session.

In contrast to the case in Kanan, Clarke (1998) observed a situation in which feasts, large, moderate, and small, appeared to occur more frequently among the Akha of northern Thailand. In particular, the frequency of household feast hosting was much greater among the Akha, where up to 13 small feasts to honor ancestors were performed by individual households each year (Clarke, 1998, p. 34). In Kanan, there were no such regularly scheduled feasts performed for the ancestors and there was no household that reportedly held close to that number of feasts in a given year (the maximum number of feasts that a single Kanan household hosted in a given year was four). In Clarke’s study, some of the household feasting material culture correlated much stronger with feasting behavior than was the case in Kanan, suggesting that the more frequent a household hosts feasts of any given size, the more likely they will be to invest in/acquire paraphernalia suited for such feasts (as opposed to borrowing necessary items, requesting that guests bring their own settings, or making do with ordinary household items).

Thus, from an archaeological perspective, the prospects of inferring the degree of household feasting from the presence of household feasting utensils (with the exception of woks and wooden serving vessels) does not seem to be terribly promising in Kanan. However, the sizes of household rice granaries hold more potential in this regard. In particular, when compared to the hosting of large feasts, household rice granary capacity correlated relatively strongly with feast hosting (Fig. 13). This makes sense intuitively considering that rice is an essential part of the vast majority of feasts in the area. As rice is also a key indicator of household wealth, this correlation is illustrative of the relationship between household wealth and feasting discussed in the following section.

Feasting and household economics

Another major goal of this study was to determine whether there were any practical social, political, or economic benefits associated with feasting in Kanan. The hosting and sponsoring of very large promotional feasts, such as funerals, was expected to entail some practical benefits due to the large investments of time, labor, and resources involved. There were two major types of benefits derived from such large feasts: (1) debt relationships and their associated investment returns and (2) advertising of ability and success.

Debt relationships and investment returns

As previously noted, one of the central aspects of feasts like funerals is the debt relationships that are established by those who give animals as gifts to the major hosts/sponsors of the funerals. Likewise, hosting and

![Fig. 13. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the number of large feasts (100+ attendees) hosted by households in past 10 years and the capacity of household rice granaries (kg of rice).](image-url)
sponsoring funerals gives Kanan households the opportunity to call in these debts. There are additional benefits, outside of the expected return gift, that can be accrued through these debt relationships as well. In central Tana Toraja, for example, I recorded a case in which an individual loaned a large amount of rice to a first cousin. The final cost to be repaid for the loan was one water buffalo. Until the debt was returned, the lender was holding and harvesting part of his cousin’s rice paddy land as collateral. The debt was evidently not established in the context of a feast, although there were no indications that a similar arrangement could not have resulted from a feast-related debt. Indeed, Torajan feasts can be used for aggrandizing purposes. As has been noted by Volkman (1985), individuals have attempted to elevate their social standing in north-central Tana Toraja by engaging in the debt relationships associated with feasting. This kind of behavior has been documented in other parts of the world as well. Yan (1996) has demonstrated how the feasting system in rural northern China has been used by individuals to increase their social, political, and economic standing. In African societies, feasting is typically used as a means to attract labor and attain social titles and is an effective method by which African kings and chiefs form alliances and support networks (Dietler, 2001; Dietler and Herbich, 2001). Likewise, among the Enga of western Papua New Guinea, feasting has traditionally been used by Big Men to establish and maintain alliance networks, reaffirm the solidarity of tribal members, recruit labor, and amass wealth by calling in feast debts in order to pay war reparations and bridewealth (Wiessner, 2001).

**Advertising**

By hosting and sponsoring feasts, Kanan households and kin groups can display their success in order to attract desirable households and groups into mutual help relationships, marriage alliances, and wealth exchanges. As previously noted, funerals and other large promotional feasts give the host households and groups the opportunity to advertise their success through lavish livestock and prestige item displays, music and dance performances, and, at a more general level, large feasts illustrate the ability of the household or group to generate surpluses and feed large numbers of people. These feasts can also result in more permanent promotional displays, such as the buffalo horns that adorn the exterior of households and represent buffaloes provided by the household at past feasts.

In order to examine the possibility that the debt relationships, investment returns, and displays that are associated with these kinds of feasts actually resulted in practical economic advantages for Kanan households, the degree to which households invested in large feasts was compared to their economic standing. If individual households did indeed accrue practical benefits, directly or indirectly, then there should have been a positive correlation between the degree a household invested in feasting and the economic standing of the household.

As with household feasting material culture, scattergrams were created to compare household wealth to household feasting investments in the past 10 years. Households were divided into three groups based on the degree to which they invested in feasts (both attended and hosted) in the past 10 years: Group 1 (households that had provided less than a combined total of 5 water buffaloes and pigs for feasts in the past 10 years), Group 2 (households that had provided a combined total of between 5 and 12 water buffaloes and pigs for feasts in the past 10 years), and Group 3 (households that had contributed more than 12 water buffaloes and pigs to feasts in the past 10 years). The mean household wealth of each household group was compared and the variability between these means was tested for statistical significance.

There were five basic elements used to estimate household wealth in Kanan: rice, coffee, pigs, water buffaloes, and cash contributions to households from relatives living outside of Kanan. These five variables essentially represent the primary items with any exchange value in the area. With regards to rice and coffee, annual harvest yield estimates were used to calculate these values as opposed to land ownership due to variation in land quality and the lack of a precise, standard traditional form of measuring plot size. In addition, due to their high value and apparent susceptibility to theft, individual household livestock holdings were cross-checked with people in other households, and it is also possible that some households intentionally misrepresented other things, such as their annual coffee harvests.

The analysis of household wealth and household feasting behavior indicates that no one factor (rice, coffee, pigs, water buffaloes, and cash contributions) displayed a strong positive correlation with feasting behavior. However, when the total reported cash contributions, annual rice harvests, coffee harvests, and the number of pigs and water buffaloes owned by households were combined into a household wealth index (the estimated monetary value in Rupiah of all components), there was a relatively strong positive correlation between household wealth and household feast investment (Fig. 14). Additionally, the mean household wealth (based on the household wealth index) of the group of households (Group 3) that invested the most livestock into feasting was considerably larger than the mean wealth of the other household groups (Fig. 15), and a $\chi^2$ (with a .05 level of significance) test indicated that this variation was statistically significant.

The positive relationship between household wealth and the degree of household feasting investment does not necessarily indicate that households become wealthier through more feasting. Indeed, investment in feasts
certainly does not entail guaranteed benefits for all involved. This is perhaps reflected by the lack of a perfect correlation between household wealth and feasting investment and the fact that some people in the more developed areas of Tana Toraja have more or less opted out of heavy feasting investments due to the escalating ex-

Fig. 14. Scattergram illustrating the correlation between the total household contribution of pigs and water buffaloes for feasts in the past 10 years and household wealth.

![Scattergram](image1)

Fig. 15. Estimated household wealth means of Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 households. Household groups are defined as follows: Group 1 (households that had contributed less than a combined total of 5 water buffaloes and pigs to feasts in the past 10 years), Group 2 (households that had contributed a combined total of between 5 and 12 water buffaloes and pigs to feasts in the past 10 years), and Group 3 (households that had contributed more than 12 water buffaloes and pigs to feasts in the past 10 years).
penses associated with feasts and the emergence of non-traditional opportunities (e.g., education) and changing values (see Ames, 1998). However, the fact that the wealthier people are, the more resources they tend to invest in feasting does require some explanation. Large funeral feasts, such as those requiring funeral organizing committees, certainly appear to serve functions beyond honoring a deceased relative and reinforcing social and family ties. There are undoubtedly potential practical benefits that can be accrued by those hosting/sponsoring the funeral as well as those attending. For the sponsoring kin groups, large funerals provide an opportunity for the promotion of the kin group and individual households within the group through the sponsoring of a grand feast. The promotion of this kind of success can serve to establish a certain degree of credibility for the sponsors. In other words, a display of economic resources is a way of advertising the ability of the households within the group to: (1) produce surpluses and desirable foods to feed large numbers of people, thereby making it easier to attract labor for endeavor such as house building; (2) be a suitable potential marriage partner or ally with other kin groups; and (3) engage in feast debt relationships. By engaging in these feasting debt relationships, households can establish closer relations with other households and groups thereby broadening their network of supporters that can be called upon in times of economic need, such as aiding with house building, and political support—especially important in cases of land or resource disputes. In addition to showing the economic means to engage in debt relationships, old debts can be recalled by those hosting/sponsoring funerals. For those attending, the funeral is a venue at which they can repay old debts or establish a new debt relationship with one or more of the sponsors by contributing a water buffalo or pig for the feast.

Considering how this kind of behavior may also lead to advantages in the political sphere, the picture is less clear. As noted previously, formal political power was essentially controlled by one individual in Kanan. The household that appeared to have had the most ‘informal’ political clout (consulting with the official village head in important matters) was surprisingly not terribly wealthy according to the household wealth index. However, much of this could be due to the fact that the household had just recently slaughtered livestock for some of the early stages of a funeral. In addition, the head of this household reported receiving cash contributions from relatives outside Kanan (without giving specific yearly cash estimates) and was the one household head, aside from the ambe' tondok (village head), who reportedly had several relatives working in business and government outside of the area. Although this is merely one example, it does appear to illustrate some of the benefits of being well-connected, which, in the local context of Kanan, is largely achieved through feasting.

Summary

The case of Kanan feasting shows how feasts can be adapted to and help create particular social, political, and economic conditions and how the material culture of feasting can reflect this pattern. In Kanan, the ecological conditions are unfavorable for the cultivation of the principal subsistence crop of Tana Toraja, wet rice. Warfare also was a major concern traditionally. Consequently, there were traditional defensive alliance arrangements between small communities. These allied villages also cooperated for work projects through a system known as si saro, which entailed the cooperation of various villages in road building, repairing irrigation works, and other projects requiring a significant amount of labor. Within individual villages, a similar arrangement, si saro sang tondok, operated when a household needed help with such things as removing rocks from a paddy field. Everyone in the village theoretically provided labor for such projects.

In addition to defensive alliances and labor arrangements, feasting is one of the primary traditional means of uniting households and villages in the area, and this concern is reflected in the emphasis on cooperation and solidarity that is part of the majority of traditional feasts performed in Kanan. More feasts in Kanan are characteristic of solidarity feasts than any of the other feasting categories described above. In these feasts, the solidarity of different levels of social organization (individual households, villages, and the allied villages) is reinforced through communal pooling of resources and equal food contributions. The promotional show of wealth in terms of grand displays of domesticated animals and prestige items on the part of individual households or groups of households is generally minimal at these events.

In Kanan, funerals are one of the few culturally sanctioned contexts in which wealth displays occur in an otherwise egalitarian context. Low productivity clearly constrained how much economic surpluses could be marshaled for such displays in Kanan (although people certainly displayed as much wealth as they could at funerals). For example, the most elaborate funeral, the aluk sukku, requiring the slaughter of sixteen water buffaloes and more than thirty-six pigs, was very rarely performed in Kanan. In addition, many of the auxiliary events associated with funerals were small in scale and appear to have been performed in large part to reinforce the solidarity of the deceased person’s family. However, it may be common to host smaller-scale solidarity-reinforcing feasts leading up to major promotional feasts centering on single individuals or households (e.g., Wiessner, 2001).

The lack of extravagant promotional displays in Kanan is not surprising considering the constraints on traditional means of accumulating wealth and surpluses.
in the relatively poor ecological conditions of Simbuang. Nonetheless, these are the same conditions under which it would be advantageous for kin groups to create cooperative or wealth exchanges with affines and establish debt relationships with other groups by hosting promotional feasts in order to broaden their socioeconomic support network, a situation similar to that found among the Akha of northern Thailand (Clarke, 1998).

In the analysis of household feasting material culture and household feasting behavior, it was found that the ownership of feasting material culture was not the best indicator of household feasting behavior in Kanan. Although there were positive correlations between the household ownership of items related to feasting and the frequency of household feast hosting, the correlations tended to be weak, indicating that other variables were at work, such as extensive borrowing, low frequency of feasting, inaccuracies in reporting, omission of information on outstanding loans (debts), and participation in the local cash economy. This was contrary to expectations and contrasted with the general pattern found in a similar study of feasting and material culture conducted by Clarke (1998, 2001) in which the relationship between material culture and feasting was found to be quite strong.

Critical in understanding this lack of a strong relationship between feasting and material culture in Kanan is the fact that none of the Kanan households hosted large feasts on a frequent basis and household feasts in Kanan tended to be quite small, often involving the household and a few family members from outside of the village. Additionally, many of the larger feasts occurring in Kanan were solidarity feasts at which the focus was not on any particular household and at which all participants may well have brought their own settings and much of their own food. This feasting pattern contrasts with that found among the Akha where household feasts, large, moderate, and small, were a much more frequent occurrence and household feasting material culture was much more strongly correlated with feasting behavior (Clarke, 1998).

It should also be emphasized that while correspondence of feasting material indicators with household feasting behavior may be weak in Kanan, the general presence of feasting vessels, animals, and paraphernalia in the community as a whole do constitute good indicators of feasting behavior at the community level.

Concerning the social strategies pursued by individuals and groups through feasts in Kanan, the solidarity and relation building and enhancement associated with feasts in Kanan generally corresponds well to the major concerns of individual households and to the social organization of the area. These concerns are played out in a variety of ways: (1) the limited household production of agricultural surpluses is mediated through relatively frequent solidarity feasts between and within households at which mutual assistance relationships are reinforced; (2) the defensive concerns of individual households are mediated through alliance relationships between communities which are reinforced through regularly scheduled inter-village solidarity feasts; (3) the interests (e.g., attracting potential mates, attracting labor, allies) of individual households and kin groups are advanced through promotional displays at large promotional feasts; and (4) political and economic support networks between households and kin groups are created and enhanced through feast debt relationships and solidarity feasting.

The last two of the above listed concerns (the advancement of the interests of households and kin groups and the creation of political and economic support networks) was reflected in the positive relationship between household wealth and feasting in Kanan. The wealthiest of the Kanan households were also the households that invested the most in feasting. The sponsoring and hosting of large feasts, such as funerals, gives households the opportunity to promote their interests through relatively lavish wealth displays.

Conclusions

To conclude, this study has demonstrated how social, political, and ecological conditions can have an effect on the scale of feasts performed in a society and on the sociopolitical strategies that are pursued in the context of feasts. It has also shown that establishing how material culture is related to feasting behavior at the household level can be a complex issue and not simply a matter of determining who owns the most feasting-related material culture. On the other hand, there are certainly abundant material indicators of the presence of feasting at the community and even household level: water buffalo crania and other domestic animal remains, pedestal wooden bowls (kandian dulang), special feasting structures and kitchens, ceremonial spears (doke’), ceremonial war helmets (rungan), ancestral textiles, and large woks all indicate that substantial feasting was taking place. Perhaps most importantly, however, this study has shown that the kind of feasting that dominates a society can affect the abundance and distribution of its feasting-related material culture. In Kanan, where solidarity-type feasts involving a communal effort on the part of the participants for providing food were prominent, it was found that the ownership of feasting-related material culture was not a very reliable indicator of individual household feasting investment. The relative infrequency of large, household-level promotional feasts in Kanan appears to lessen the need for households to amass an abundance of plates, large cooking vessels, and other items needed to host large feasts. However, it is interesting to note that even under the conditions of solidarity...
and cooperation that were apparent in many of the Kanan feasts and in the relations between households and villages, the relationship between household wealth and feasting was strong, indicating that even in a nominally egalitarian (i.e., without class differentiation) community, feasts still represent a venue at which the socioeconomic interests of individual households and kin groups can be advanced by hosting/sponsoring large feasts.

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