

# Feasting Among the Akha: The 1996 Report

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## I. INTRODUCTION

We would like to suggest that the adaptive specialization which really distinguishes human beings from other species is not language, nor learned behavior, nor material technology, but something we shall call “social technology.” Social technology can be defined as the creation and use of social relationships in order to procure access to food, labor, or other important resources (Hayden, 1993). While there are many examples of nonhuman animal species that make and use tools, that teach their young various behaviors, and that even can use language or abstract reasoning, there are few, if any other species that create and use social relationships in order to access food either to the extent or in the manner that humans do. Some primates may use hierarchical ranking relationships or sexual relationships to gain access to occasional favored food items. There is nothing in the rest of the animal kingdom, however, that can compare with human kinship systems, alliance networks, ritual behavior, and feasting as means of obtaining food and other resources.

In fact, humans spend so much of their time engaged in socializing in traditional societies that it is surprising that with but few exceptions, cultural ecologists and other anthropologists have not more seriously explored human social phenomena as “social technology.” We would like to propose that the adaptive value in human language ultimately resides in the fact that it greatly facilitates the development of social technology and the kinds of relationships required to render social technology a viable means of accessing resources. Feasting is but one branch of this social technology, but it is an important one and one that has not received the theoretical or comparative attention that it deserves in the last few decades. Feasting is universal to all human societies, and generally involves significant, sometimes very significant, expenditures of time, effort, and resources. Feasting is frequently viewed as extremely important in emic perceptions. And feasting can be viewed as having roots extending far back into primate origins where food sharing is often used as a means to establish sexual relationships or acknowledge dominance relationships. Our purpose in this analysis is to try to place a particular culture’s feasting behavior in the context of cultural ecology, and in particular to try to understand the social technology dimension of the culture’s feasts.

In our report for 1995, we set out the general theoretical and methodological framework for the study of feasting. We also explained why the Akha were chosen for this study, we provided historical background of the Akha, and we explored the description and explanation of their feasting behavior in a preliminary fashion. These facets of our study do not need to be repeated here, however, some assumptions will be clarified. The main purpose of this report is to examine key issues, such as political control, more closely and to provide further documentation on the various kinds of feasting that the Akha engage in.

As noted last year, the key issue to be addressed is whether Akha feasting is used to achieve practical goals such as the acquisition of wealth or security or power, or whether feasting is first and foremost for amusement, enjoyment, or the psychological gratification of appreciation by others (prestige). From the perspective of cultural ecology, we expect that there should be practical benefits associated with Akha feasts due to their frequency, costliness in time and

resources, and their persistence. However, aggrandizers and those in power generally try to disguise the means by which they attempt to manipulate people, at least in transegalitarian societies where power is precarious. Therefore, the real benefits derived from feasting are generally covert, implicit, unstated, disguised, or even denied. What, then, might be some of the benefits of feasting? Following the 1995 study, we suggest that they fall into 3 broad categories: security (in old age, in sickness, in confrontation), political power, and the acquisition of wealth or control over resources. These categories obviously overlap and even can be considered facets of each other. To complicate matters even further, it is clear that the feasting and associated religious and political institutions of the Akha evolved as adaptations to conditions that differ significantly from the conditions that exist today (see Hayden and Maneprasert 1995)—a topic that we will expand upon later.

Despite the difficulties created by hidden agendas and changed environments of all types, we feel that considerable insight can be gained into traditional Akha feasting precisely because many of the forms have persisted up until now and because we approach the study of feasting on the basis of behavior, and not simply emic conceptualizations.

## ASSUMPTIONS AND ISSUES

### II. METHODOLOGY

The study of a culture through its feasting behavior may seem like a strange way of trying to understand the most fundamental aspects of a culture. Yet, if we adopt the view that feasting is one of several basic forms of social technology, and that social technology played a critical role in determining individual (and community) survival, reproductive success, and economic well-being, then feasting is a natural topic to concentrate on. We will discuss just how feasting could be important in these ways shortly. Feasting is also a useful focus for understanding traditional cultures since understanding feasting also entails understanding subsistence, regional exchange, alliances, corporate groups, kinship, ritual, and the structure of political power in a community.

The approach that we use is a cultural ecological one in that it emphasizes the role of resources in explaining patterned cultural behavior and it assumes that practical self-benefit must be sought wherever persistent types of behavior involve substantial investments of time, effort, and materials. Feasting frequently, if not universally fits this description and therefore is a prime candidate for exploring using the cultural ecological approach.

In order to examine feasting from a cultural ecological perspective, it is necessary to describe all aspects of the feast that might have practical consequences. Like alliances and kinship and ritual, most participants in feasting are not aware of some of the deeper social and economic ramifications. Emic oblivion to the adaptive importance of social technology seems to be pervasive in all cultures, including our own. How many people, for example, are aware of the social reasons for giving Yule gifts or Christmas dinners?

Thus, although emic explanations of feasts may sometimes provide clues to the real adaptive reasons for feasting (and on occasion may even be in accord with etic explanations), other methods must generally be used to understand the basic function of a specific type of feast in a specific culture. This is why a careful description of actual behavior associated with feasts

and feasting consequences is essential. By examining the descriptive dimensions of feasting, it should be possible to identify feast functions using a few basic axioms or principles.

### Power

While we certainly do not argue that all or even most people are predominantly motivated to acquire power, it does seem reasonable to suggest that at least some people, perhaps only a small percentage of people, in all populations are motivated to maximize their own self-benefits and power. We call such people, “aggrandizers.” This accords well with evolutionary biological theory in which self-interest must be maximized at some level for life forms to persist. Moreover to create major changes in social and economic systems, it only takes a few skilled, dedicated, and determined individuals trying to maximize their self-interest. For instance, Leach (1954: 87, 171) observed that Kachin headmen were constantly seeking changes to improve their own positions. This is undoubtedly the cause of the high levels of competition he documents in Kachin society (Leach 1954: 194) as well the competition present in Akha society (Alting von Geusau 1983: 41; Kammerer 1986)—in both cases despite egalitarian ethics. Junker et al. (1994) have recently examined Southeast Asian feasting from a very similar perspective.

It also seems reasonable to suggest that power will be of critical concern to individuals and households that are threatened with the loss of their own freedom, resources, or other valued aspects of life. This is not as radical a position as that espoused by Leach (1954:vi, 10, 194) for whom power is innately satisfying and the primary motivating force in decision making. While this seems an extreme generalization, it is perhaps more realistic to argue that those people who do strive to maximize their own power in any community will naturally seek out and compete for the social positions that provide the most opportunities to acquire power—notably the most important political and kinship positions. Feasting is a major avenue for acquiring these positions and for maximizing one’s power in them. Even if one does not technically qualify to fill political positions on hereditary grounds, genealogies can always be manipulated and social positions justified given enough ambition, talent, wealth, and feasting (Leach 1954:69, 149, 163-

4, 195, 201, 208, 214, 262). There is no reason to believe that the Akha should be any different from the other Kachin Tibeto-Burman speakers in this regard. Although the Kachin are a polyethnic cultural group that shares the same ritual-symbolic-political-social conventions, the predominant ethnic groups of the Kachin are Tibeto-Burman speakers. It seems likely that the Thai Akha spent considerable time as part of, or in contact with this Kachin polyethnic system, because many of the elements of the Kachin system also characterize the Akha. On the other hand, the Akha have many cultural elements not shared with the Kachin, and there are no indications that the Akha were ever subordinate to Kachin groups.

Given Leach's statements and observations about power, it is surprising to find other, very contradictory statements in the same publication to the effect that people seek public offices not because of political or economic benefits, but purely for prestige or status purposes (Leach 1954: 155, 171-2, 182-3). Similarly, according to him, chiefs do not derive their power from any practical leverage they exert, but only from their religious role (Leach 1954:183—but see below for contrary observations). Perhaps all great works incorporate a multitude of interpretations but Leach's contractions seem to be intentionally set up to embody the extremes of interpretation in anthropology—a feature he perhaps viewed as an essential element in all societies and certainly in Kachin society. Given the specific observations he made on the acquisition and nature of power (see below), it is difficult to take his limited statements about the symbolic quest for status (versus the practical quest for power) very seriously. His preoccupation with incorporating contradictory positions in a single framework seems to have got the better of his judgement, unless it was meant as a parody of the discipline.

### Levels of Political Complexity

The above assumption about the occurrence of some power-seeking individuals in all populations and their tendency to gravitate toward positions of actual or potential power leads to the expectation that if power is related to wealth, where surpluses and wealth increase, so will the concentration of power and political complexity. Leach (1954:21, 34, 38, 40, 171, 224, 236)

repeatedly states that the occurrence of surplus-producing land or wealth-producing territory (whether paddy, ores, jade, or trade routes) was the critical factor in leading to political complexity, and he provides numerous examples from Shan states to complex Kachin chiefdoms.

Although elsewhere Leach (1954:63, 233) argues that there is no relation between ecology and the gumsa versus gumlao political systems, this is strictly an emic ideological distinction. In reality, and in practice, both ideological systems cover a range of political complexity from relatively simple egalitarian villages to multi-village hierarchies (Leach 1954:206-9). Unfortunately, beyond the broad trends he notes, Leach does not indicate how real political complexity varies in relationship to specific resource characteristics in most of his area of study. Even if there are some confusing transitional conditions where both “egalitarian” and hierarchical political systems can exist or alternate, by and large, resources do appear to constitute a major determining factor in explaining levels of achieved political complexity. As Leach (1954:203, 206-7) has astutely observed, where resources can support hierarchical systems, egalitarian systems are unstable and hard to maintain. Alting von Geusau (1983:35-6) also notes strong tendencies toward inequality among the Akha. These observations imply that in all systems there are at least some individuals who are always trying to find ways to maximize their own political power (as previously noted by Leach)—even if they lead revolts in the name of egalitarianism (Leach 1954:262-3). Clearly such individuals must find ways of converting wealth into power and vice versa, despite claims that the wealthy are not necessarily powerful (it is true that only those who *use* wealth to acquire power are powerful) and that the powerful are not necessarily wealthy (a more dubious proposition that depends on how one converts debts into wealth).

Interestingly, the Akha seem to have achieved a sort of stable “egalitarian” political system in the past, probably, however, only due to their use of poor quality land unwanted by other groups which resulted in “harsh” conditions and minimal surpluses (Alting von Geusau 1983). We suggest that even though conditions do not permit any significant degree of power acquisition, the basic Akha social and political system is “primed” to evolve into a more

hierarchical system when resource conditions become more favourable. A similar situation was documented among Mesoamerican transegalitarian villages by Hayden and Gargett (1990). Key elements in this “primed” structure are the political power structure (including the clan structure), the supporting political alliances, the feasting networks, and the pronounced levels of competition. Indeed, the headman’s son and grandson in one of the Akha villages we visited told us *numerous* times with pride how much each construction phase of their new house cost and how much their car cost. Other economically successful families also offered us detailed accounts of how they gained and spent their wealth as a point of pride. In all these cases, key roles were played by financing and educating young male wage earners to work abroad.

#### Cultural Norms Versus Practical Concerns

When asked why the Akha, or any other hill tribe engages in specific types of behavior, whether feasting, political office, communal living, or taboos, the most common response from ethnographers is that cultural traditions, or “norms,” are responsible. In contrast, cultural ecologists maintain that behaviour with significant practical consequences for most people should be adaptive. There are numerous observations made by regional ethnographers that clearly dispel the notion of the “tyranny” of cultural norms, customs, and traditions, although in some cases, the only clear benefit of certain taboos, rituals, symbols, or unusual dress styles may be to differentiate one village or group from others, thereby fostering greater mutual defense, assistance, and security within a specified group (Leach 1954:10-12, 16). Where practical concerns come in conflict with traditional customs and values, even the most sacrosanct “norms” eventually give way. Leach (1954:8, 10, 221, 262-3) clearly states the principle of self-interest that is at the base of all such decisions and gives examples of complete disregard of even the most basic social values by both commoner and elite Kachin when self-interest was at stake. Political leaders, in particular, “treated economic facts with greater respect than ritual theories” (Leach 1954:262). While in emic theory, behavior is rigidly constrained, in actual fact the definitions employed are so flexible that individuals generally can do what they like *so long as*

*they have the backing and power and wealth to ward off criticisms and other attacks* (Leach 1954:90, 106, 262). All “offenses” are open to negotiation. Obviously, others’ interests, especially the interests of close kin, constrain an individual’s behavior. We suggest that Akha ideology above all draws attention to these considerations. Leach proposes this ideological rigidity coupled with behavioral flexibility as a characteristic of all “primitive” societies. Similarly, Alting Von Geusau (1983) argues that Akha traditions are used as guidelines for present decisions, recognizing “that conditions have changed from those that the Akha ancestors had to deal with. Implicit in this view is the notion that originally there were also good practical reasons for the ancestors to do most things in specific ways. This, too, is a basic assumption in our study.

## TECHNIQUES FOR ACQUIRING POWER

A number of techniques used by aggrandizers for acquiring power have been documented by Hayden (1995). Here, we simply want to emphasize that social relationships with, and support by, key members of a community are the ultimate foundations of power in transegalitarian societies. If a person has such support, he can win disputes, fend off accusations, appropriate new sources of wealth, and indenture others (through high bride prices or compensation claims for damages or slander). As Leach (1954:129, 182) states it, families with no status have no public support while families with influence get public support. Relationships with such “high status” families are viewed as advantageous. How then does one acquire influence, or “status?” One of the most common ways that are used in perhaps all transegalitarian societies is via the establishment of binding, contractual debts. Leach (1954:142, 152, 153) argues that debts ensure the continuity of relationships, and that the public presentation of prestige items to others at feasts of varying kinds is a way to obtain status (as in the Akha Recognition feasts). For Leach, all mutual relationships are systems of debt. In reality, debts constitute the social structure. In order to reinforce the obligation of such debts they are usually contracted publicly or semi-publicly at feasts with many important witnesses as well as supernatural warrants or sanctions (e.g., Leach 1954:179). One of our most critical premises is that many feasts are above all events that aim to create or maintain social relationships (although some feasts are used for short-term economic relationships or other purposes). When used in this fashion, feasts also become contractual debts, even if no prestige items (other than special foods) are given away or consumed. If A is specifically invited to a feast by B, it becomes obligatory for A to invite B to a similar feast within a reasonable time if A does not want to create an unfriendly relationship with B. The more such mutual feasting takes place, the more mutual alliance and support can be expected between the principal participants. Such strategies are key elements in acquiring political power in transegalitarian societies, especially in swidden communities where there is abundant land and families are not tied to specific locations by large investments in land or facilities. Obviously, those households which can afford to hold

impressive feasts most frequently are generally among the richer households of a community. And it should come as no surprise that the community aggrandizers are the ones who promote the most frequent and the most lavish feasts (Leach 1954: 97, 187). It is to their benefit in terms of consolidating political support through larger debts and also in terms of promoting ever increasing production of surpluses that aggrandizers can control some part of via feasts and debts. Larger Akha feasts can also be used to broaden the sphere of political control of aggrandizers to include other communities through establishing closer economic, social and political connections with clan affiliates. Ambitious aggrandizers probably also promoted the need for the many minor auxilliary feasts for bad spirit appeasement and good luck spirits that made many feasts even more elaborate affairs (Leach 1954:177). And the Akha claims that village officials and elders were the only ones to know the names of powerful spirits (Alting von Geusau 1983:13) is a relatively transparent subterfuge of a similar nature for consolidating power.

These, then, are some of the key issues and assumptions that will guide our discussion of Akha feasting.

### FEASTING FUNCTIONS

To begin with, the basic types of practical advantages that can be derived from feasting are probably relatively limited, although quite important. The most obvious advantages in transegalitarian culture include:

1. The creation of social “solidarity” in family, corporate, elite, sodality, or community groups. Solidarity in these cases promotes economic cooperation (e.g., mutual work or food exchanges when needed) and adherence to the basic values that facilitate cooperation within the group. Solidarity feasting is similar to alliance creation, but occurs within a group rather than between groups. Solidarity feasting lacks the rigid boundary maintenance between allied groups as emphasized by obligatory and carefully monitored reciprocal gifts and food servings.

2. The creation and maintenance of alliances between corporate groups or communities for reasons of defense, mate exchange, or various forms of economic cooperation such as wealth exchange. These are referred to as “reciprocal” feasts.

3. The concentration of wealth and political power through the manipulation of feasting related debts and resources.

4. The recruitment of desirable, highly productive help or labor to a family, corporate group, or community via advertising the success of the group and displaying advantages of group membership. These are termed “promotional feasts.”

5. The creation of direct economic benefits through paybacks of invested feasting resources with interest. These feasts are referred to as “competitive feasts.”

6. Acquiring political support or positions.

7. Solliciting those more powerful for favors or support.

8. The acquisition of labor or other direct benefits in exchange for feast participation. These are referred to as “work feasts.”

There may be other ways that feasts can provide practical benefits that have not been considered, but these six ways that feasts can provide practical advantages constitute a good starting position for our analysis. The various purposes of feasts are displayed in Figure 1. Since feasting as a general phenomenon has not previously been examined from an explicit cultural ecology viewpoint, the present study must of necessity be largely heuristic and exploratory. To complicate matters, it is clear that several different types of benefits can sometimes be associated with a single feasting event (Figure 2). However, for the time being, we will treat the various functions of feasts as relatively pure and discrete forms.

### Axioms

If we assume that a feast is being held for one of the above purposes, a number of distinct expectations concerning feast characteristics can be logically derived from each purpose. We outline the most important of these here.

Solidarity Feasts: Participation in these feasts should be almost exclusive to some identifiable groups (e.g., family, community). Hierarchical behavior related to wealth differences should be minimized, and there should be widespread contributions to the feast from participants as well as equal sharing of foods. Where surpluses are very constrained, special serving vessels need not be used and the food items may not even be very unusual, although where surpluses are more substantial, special foods and paraphernalia can be used.

Solicitation Feasts: At present, we are only aware of petition feasting involving relations between individuals or small groups of people. These always involve an asymmetrical, hierarchical relationship with the feast-giver in a subordinate position. No reciprocal feasting is expected or required.

Reciprocal Feasts: Participants in feasts to create alliances should be from at least two recognizable, distinct social groups (e.g., distinct communities, kinship, or corporate groups), with one group acting as the host. Because most alliances involve mutual support between more or less equal groups, these feasts should also be reciprocal in nature, with each group trying to be careful not to provide less than they were previously given, nor significantly more so that their allies feel neither slighted, nor uncomfortably committed to excessive returns. However, some efforts can be expected to be made to favorably impress allies, or potential allies, with the success and desirableness of allying with the host group. Where surpluses permit, this may be expressed in providing specialty food items, specially crafted food serving paraphernalia, and unusual public ritual displays or dances. This aspect of reciprocal feasting can be easily transformed into more overt competitive boasting and competitive feasting. Thus, reciprocal feasting can display either strict non-competitive egalitarian relationships or more competitive relationships. In the latter case, it becomes an important transitional form of feasting leading to competition. Feasting contributions should come from the group at large, and in its egalitarian form, food should be more or less equitably shared, with few hierarchical distinctions based on wealth evident. This may not preclude attempts by the central organizing individuals to manipulate these feasts for their own benefit.

Feasts to Obtain Political Power: Ambitious individuals who want to gain dominant control in communities can be expected to actively promote costly feasts requiring the production of considerable surpluses under the guise of a number of good causes (e.g., the need for good allies, displays of success to recruit high quality personnel, profit). At present, we do not consider small feasts among transegalitarian political cronies under this category, although considerable mutual political support may be brokered in such feasts. They seem to conform more to the small “solidarity” and mutual support feasts. In large “political” feasts, ambitious individuals can be expected to promote themselves to positions of most importance in the feast, which may take on a hierarchical character. Such organizers may try to promote ever larger commitments and contributions from supporters, thereby creating significant debts. Contractual debts appear to be one of the principal means used by ambitious individuals to create personal and political power within communities. For these reasons, it may often be difficult to separate feasts geared to establish political power from those meant to make investment profits. Where resources permit, politically ambitious people tend to use profit incentives to establish debts and political control. At resource levels where less surpluses are possible, ambitious leaders must be content with trying to extract some resources from supporters for more noble or necessary causes. They generally try to make as many people as possible commit themselves to supporting the feasts. Some indication of manipulation of feasting foods or debts is often evident in terms of who gets the largest or best portions, or who participates in more exclusive “organizers” feasts (often held in special structures). Some form of hierarchy relating feasts to the acquisition of high political/religious office is also frequent although masked by a requisite lip service to equality in all things among supporters. It is not clear to what extent special foods or prestige paraphernalia might be involved in these feasts, although the likelihood of them being present is probably greater in the more exclusive “organizers’ feasts.”

Competitive Feasts: Since the principal aim of competitive feasts is to increase the total debt owed and to collect the greatest amount of interest possible (i.e., to maximize investment profits), competitive feasts typically assume large proportions, incorporating as many people as

possible for wealth and food collection and distribution. Specialty foods typify competitive feasting. Ostentatious rituals, special serving vessels, and prestige item gifts might also be expected. In extreme forms, food is conspicuously wasted or even destroyed. There is generally some form of public accounting of the most important foods and gifts given in these feasts. Reciprocal feasts from the principal guests are absolutely mandatory.

A special type of competitive feast involve the use of feasting as a criterion for advancement up the hierarchy of established political, religious, or corporate organizations (e.g., the Mesoamerican cargo system—Hayden and Gargett 1990). Essentially, the person who is able to give the most elaborate feast can be assumed to have the best and most productive socioeconomic connections and the best organizational skills. He therefore should be the one logically chosen for advancement. In such cases, large major feasts are the responsibility of a single person and only occur once or a few times in his lifetime. There is no reciprocal feast-giving involved, and considerable amounts of food, liquor, and other materials are consumed or given away with no expectation of return. These feasts involve large numbers of people and are intensely competitive between those vying for high political or other offices.

Promotional Feasts: The main aim of promotional feasts is to advertise the success of a family, group, or community in order to attract desirable labor in the form of mates, workers, or economic clients. Therefore, these feasts generally display wealth, involve specialty foods and food-serving vessels, and are non-reciprocal. Wealth items and food may be destroyed or ostentatiously wasted. No payback for food or small gifts is required or expected. Because of recruitment uncertainties, a wide net is cast in terms of guests, frequently without any one group identifiable as a “principal” guest. These feasts tend to be relatively large affairs to enhance the “prestige” of the group, and also to ensure that the promotional message is widely disseminated. Promotional feasts probably are most prevalent where labor is the major bottleneck constraining full productivity and realization of maximum wealth.

Work Feasts: These are perhaps the easiest types of feasts to identify since they are associated with a major work event (e.g., house building, moving monumental stone blocks,

gathering ores, etc.), and since invitations do not target any particular group other than willing workers. Food may or may not include specialty items depending on surpluses and how well fed the prospective labor force is. No special food serving vessels are required other than large sized containers, and no feasting reciprocity is called for. Emic explanations of this feast type most frequently coincide with etic explanations.

### Dimensions

With these initial principles in mind, it is now possible to generate a list of descriptive elements, or feasting dimensions, which should enable analysts to identify the varying purposes of feasts within a community. These are substantially different from common anthropological divisions of celebrations according to calendrical versus event scheduling, or personal versus nature oriented celebrations (La Fontaine 1985:28). However these differences reflect our ecological orientation rather than the conceptual or social orientation of anthropologists. The list of attributes important for analyzing feasts from an ecological perspective includes:

1. The number of people invited (including sex and age status);
2. Who is invited (what are their relationships to the hosts; what are their positions in the community);
3. Who organizes the feast and promotes it;
4. Who contributes food, labor, or other items to the feast, and how much do they contribute;
5. What gifts (food or other items) are given to take away, and to whom are they given; what is their value, and who presents them;
6. Is reciprocity of the feast or gifts obligatory or expected; are increases in foods or gifts demanded or strived for;
7. How public is the feast;
8. Is there any public accounting or witnessing;

9. What normal and specialty foods are used and in what quantities; how do specialty foods (including alcohol) differ from normal foods in terms of procurement and processing costs (time, effort, or exchange); who gets to eat the most special foods;

10. What special serving vessels are used and who is served with the most special vessels;

11. What conspicuous waste or destruction of food or prestige items takes place;

12. What hierarchical organization exists in feasting roles;

13. What is the emically stated purpose of the feast;

and

14. Some measure of the overall amount and reliability of surplus production in the community and its households.

These dimensions can be assembled into a provisional diagram according to feasting types, as represented in Figure 3.

For purposes of identifying the various types of feasts archaeologically, a number of additional descriptors are required (Figure 4). These include:

1. The location of food preparation and consumption areas;

2. The construction of special structures (temporary and permanent) for feasting, including special structures for principal organizers, guests and hosts;

3. The size of cooking and serving vessels, and any special vessels required to prepare specialty food items (e.g., brewing, prolonged cooking, straining vessels);

4. The number of serving and large cooking vessels;

5. What is done with food refuse, especially any food ostentatiously wasted or destroyed.

6. The size of food preparation features (hearths in particular);

Interpretations of these observations should also take into account the extent to which socioeconomic conditions permit overt, ostentatious displays of superior wealth and political control. Typically, where surpluses are limited, egalitarian ideologies must be respected at least in public and political maneuvering may be covert. In these cases, it may be difficult to

determine to what extent, overtly or covertly, performance in certain types of feasts is being used as a criterion to determine suitability for succession to politically powerful positions. This is why observations on actual behavior are much more critical to the study of feasting than recording emic ideological details about feasting.

From a general perspective, the 3 most important factors in explaining feasting variability are probably: 1) the purpose of the feast; 2) the group involved; and 3) the amount of surplus that can be marshalled for feasting purposes.

In defining our feasting field of study, we will limit ourselves to events which clearly entail resource consequences for more than one individual. Thus, although some offerings to spirits may be conceptually viewed as a feast between an individual and a spirit, it has no observable effect on resource access and will not be considered here as a feast with tangible cultural ecological benefits or social technological functions. Obviously, a gray area exists where exactly the same procedures might be used in the company of another person.

## AKHA FEASTS

### The Household and the Lineage

The vast majority of the regular, calendrical feasts of the Akha are household, extended family solidarity rituals focused on the worship of ancestors (Kammerer 1986). This indicates a number of important things about traditional Akha society. First, in contrast to the corporate group centered feasts and support network of the Hmong or the Rhadé in Vietnam, the primary support network in times of difficulty for Akha families is the extended family (father, brothers, sons, and only secondarily sisters' husbands, uncles, or grandparents). Although all subsistence communities require some network of support to cope with crop failures, illness, disputes, and accidents, the Akha case would seem to indicate that under pacified conditions, these networks did not have to be very large. This implies that the very large, corporate support networks of groups like the Rhadé probably were based more on considerations of defense or possible wealth and power accumulations rather than pure risk reduction in the subsistence domain (see Hayden

and Tran, n.d.). Among the Akha, the close cooperation of the extended family, and especially between the parents and the son remaining in the father's house is absolutely critical for the survival of parents in their old age and to maximize the wealth and comfort of the elderly (see Kammerer 1986:146; and Durrenberger 1979 and Miles 1972 cited in Kammerer).

As with ancestor cults elsewhere (I. Lewis 1989:114, 129), ancestors are used to legitimize the authority of lineage, clan, or family heads, to legitimize claims to land, and to sanction behavior that deviates from the support of those authorities. In the Akha case, it is clearly the support of parents by sons that is the main goal since the criterion for setting up an independent household is a land grant from the father *and* the setting up of an ancestral shrine in the new household. Ancestors are thought to stay in the heavenly ancestral household (*pipidzuma*) for only 3 generations, after which they appear to revert to a common pool of ancestors from which new family members are born. This limitation of spiritually active ancestors to only 3 generations is another strong indication that the primary support network consists of the closest kin and essentially disappears at the recognizable limits of the lineage.

Each household with a separate ancestral shrine celebrates their ancestral feasts independently and forms an independent economic production and consumption unit, storing all produce and eating together. Significantly, there is also a feast when a new household is established, presumably very similar to the ancestral feasts (Kammerer 1986:99). Household ancestral, or "offering," feasts (*a poe low eu*) are relatively small, intimate, and simple affairs, involving only the household parents, unmarried children, married children that have not yet set up independent households, and the married son that is expected to stay in the parents household, inheriting most of their assets, and continuing family ancestral worship. The main function of household solidarity feasts is probably to defuse or quell the intergenerational and sibling disputes that are particularly virulent in Akha and probably most hilltribe communities (Ral, notes, Leach). Household ancestors can play important roles in assuring that the designated son really will look after elder parents and that older siblings will not usurp the family resources or claim too much of them for themselves when they move out of the parental home. These family

solidarity feasts occur on 9 occasions during the year and are sometimes combined with broader, village-wide ceremonies or feasts (see Kammerer 1986:154 for a full listing). In all cases, the village headman (*dzuma*) initiates the ancestral feasts first in his house, after which he rings a gong to signal other households to begin.

Aside from miniature tables and ceramic bowls and cups for the ancestors, the use of a table, and perhaps the use of a simple glass for serving alcohol, all of the cooking and serving vessels are completely ordinary. The food, however is more special than daily fare, and must include a chicken (“noble” food), tea, specially flavored ritually “pure” cooked glutinous rice (the “*lada*” cup), rice wine, and rice flour cakes or dumplings (labor intensive to produce). Alcohol is normally only consumed in ancestor and other feasting contexts. After the formal household ancestor feast, informal visiting of other households frequently occurs, probably especially to other lineage households, again reinforcing the lineage solidarity network in case of need, but on a less intense level. This same lineage solidarity and support (as well as mutual support relations with the wife’s close kin) is expressed during funeral feasts, to be discussed below.

The lack of formal involvement of other lineage members in ancestral solidarity feasts clearly indicates the lack of direct lineage control, although the honorific position of lineage head, the extension of ancestor worship to 3 generations, and lineage involvement in funerals clearly indicate a moral expectation of mutual support among lineage members. In the specific case of needing to borrow rice (or cash) due to family shortages, a family first goes to other families sharing the same ancestral shrine and compound (if there are other families). The borrowing family is not required to pay back any loans in this case. If sufficient food or cash is not available there, the family then tries to borrow from other families in the lineage, preferably those as closely related as possible, with repayment expected on a par basis. Mutual cooperation within the patrilineage is certainly still the ideal today (Kammerer 1986:148) and may have been even more evident in the past. According to Akha standards, most people would be too ashamed to ask anyone outside their own lineage for loans, indicating that in most circumstances, this

support network system functioned very adequately, although we know of at least one case of loans acquired through the wife's kin, and Kammerer (1986:148-9) records some intra-village loaning and the occasional charging of interest in contemporary conditions.

### Lineage Based Feasts

As we suggested in 1995, the lineage appears to provide the main support and safety net in traditional and contemporary Akha communities. We might suggest that the importance of these social safety nets can be measured and even graphed in terms of the costs of time and energy devoted to their maintenance (e.g., in terms of feasts) arranged by the social distance of participants which would provide a measure of the extensiveness of such networks.

If a person requires assistance of any sort, the first recourse is to household and then to lineage members. Therefore, according to our theoretical model of feasting, we should expect feasting involving lineage members to be a prominent feature in Akha life. Moreover, the more help that a lineage member can provide (either due to his position in the lineage or due to his wealth), the more he should be involved in feasting between lineage members, and involved in giving reciprocal feasts.

Under traditional circumstances, there were two types of situations in which assistance from other households was highly desirable, if not critical for survival: subsistence crises and social-political crises.

Subsistence crises: While actual starvation is not remembered in any Akha oral history (a feature that also typifies the Central Highlands of Vietnam), periods of privation are certainly familiar to all groups. Alting von Geusau (1983:23, 48) argues that absolute poverty and malnutrition are common in Akha villages and that there are substantial inequalities between rich and poor (however a 1994 report indicates better health conditions a decade later). The Akha use a number of risk-reduction strategies (per Wiessner 1982) to cope with food shortages; these include a) the accumulation of wealth in the form of food surpluses (especially livestock), jewelry, and debts, b) the use of kinship (lineage) ties to get food from those with surpluses, c)

the use of forest foods and probably low ranked swidden foods such as manioc or cabbage, d) the production and sale of cash crops, and e) wage labor. The combined effect of all these strategies has apparently been extremely successful in averting serious starvation within living memory. The increased importance of wage labor, cash crops, and new, low rank crops such as manioc and cabbage (Maneeprasert 1988) have undoubtedly lessened the importance of the kinship network in averting subsistence crises in recent years and may partly explain the relatively weak development of lineages among contemporary Akha. These lineages were probably stronger under more traditional conditions.

The use of new crops such as cabbage, manioc, and sweet potatoes as well as the creation of paddy fields have also undoubtedly reduced the risks of crop failures which can be quite significant for cereal crops like swidden rice and maize. There are numerous causes for these crop failures including unseasonable low temperatures that prevent rice grains from forming (a situation that produced very poor harvests (30% of normal) in Mae Salep in 1995 and which was a chronic source of anxiety in the Kachin Hills as well (Leach 1954:173-4). In terms of traditional ceremonies and taboos, crop damage from insects and rats were also major preoccupations with severe problems recorded at Mae Salep in 1987 resulting in an additional special ceremony (Maneeprasert 1988:7; Zhang and Lu 1993:1).

In addition to substantial fluctuations in food resources, other crises can affect a family's ability to provide their own subsistence. These factors include serious and disabling accidents, illnesses, absences, or the death of key productive members of a household. Given very marginal and episodic surpluses, all of the above factors create extreme fluctuations in the fortunes of any particular household or lineage, rendering wealth and political control positions highly unstable over time. In fact, the loss of wealth is a recurrent theme in Akha oral history (Alting von Geusau 1983:24, 48).

Socio-political crises: The other, and perhaps more current, reason for maintaining close cooperative ties with other lineage households is for security during social and political crises. These crises include disputes with other households over debts or damages (especially damages

incurred by one's household animals in others' fields or done to others' domestic stock) or the seriousness of transgressions against the many Akha customs and taboos. In other hill tribes such as the Kachin and the Mon-Khmer of Vietnam, disputes most frequently revolve around women and marriages; however in these cases, substantial bride prices and wealth exchanges are involved. Among the Akha, there is no significant bride price, and therefore marriage disputes between households do not appear to be of great consequence except that parental households of divorced couples cannot participate in each others' feasts.

While there is ample documentation that disputes between households, lineages, and villages were common if not chronic among most hill tribes in pre-colonial times (Leach 1954:21, 28, 70, 90-2, 98, 131-2, 158, 179-186, 201), today, the settling of serious disputes has been taken over by various levels of Thai government. Formerly, transgressions against customs and compensation for damages were matters to be negotiated between lineage leaders probably with the more influential lineages generally gaining the upper hand as among the Kachin (Leach 1954:182-5). Today, the real power of village and lineage leaders has been considerably diminished and it is not clear precisely what they can effectively demand or impose on other households in the face of Thai governmental constraints. Among other hill tribes, indebted servitude (slavery), expulsion from the community, loss of wealth, or even death were possible outcomes of poorly defended disputes (Leach 1954:129, 145-8, 160, 167, 179-186, 245). Today, even expulsion from communities no longer appears to be a viable option in Thailand. This loss of judicial and executive power of the lineages (and village administrators) means that lineages are no longer able to defend member's interests as in the past, or to provide as effective a safety net for them as in the past. This may partially explain why conflicts over equal access to resources usually take the form of ideological disputes between lineages or families (Alting von Geusau 1983:47), although this may equally be an artifice to maintain the appearance of adherence to egalitarian principles while actually trying to maximize one's economic or political self-interest.

Given the erosion of the traditional role of lineages in providing a safety net for subsistence and socio-political crises, it is not surprising that lineage strength should generally be weak in Akha communities. However, lineages still do play some role in both these domains, for, as Alting von Geusau (1983:26, 42, 48) notes, natural and man-made disasters are frequent occurrences among the Akha. Feasts therefore still exist that promote solidarity and cooperation within lineages, as we documented in 1995. Given the declining power and advantages of lineage membership, the increased self-sufficiency of nuclear families, and the continuing costs of maintaining traditional lineage and community political affiliations, it is not surprising that many families (especially those receiving few benefits from the traditional system) are abandoning the traditional Akha system in favor of a more independent, freer existence in Christian communities. It seems inevitable that this trend will continue unless substantial changes are made to the traditional Akha social and political system.

Lineage Feasts: We previously suggested that the feasts primarily used to maintain alliances between lineage households (i.e., to maintain lineage solidarity) included marriage feasts, and funeral feasts. We can now probably add “curing” feasts, new house, and perhaps housebuilding work feasts to this list.

We suspect that marriage feasts are above all else lineage based feasts. For the first part of the ceremony, there is only a very minimal feast involving both the groom’s and the bride’s nuclear families (Kammerer 1989). This part clearly is an inter-household alliance feast for helping the newly created family. However, for the second part of the ceremony (held on a subsequent day) there is a much more substantial feast when the groom brings his bride home. The bride’s kin are systematically excluded from the feast at the groom’s house. We were told by one of the wealthiest men of Mae Salep that when he gave a feast to marry his son, 2 years ago, the “bringing home” (of the bride) feast lasted 2 days and that he went to “every house” in the village to announce the marriage and to invite every household to the feast. This is not, perhaps, typical of most marriage feasts (Kammerer 1989). Allegedly “everyone” in the village came, but this seems to be a common euphemism for “everyone of importance to the speaker,” as

we will see. We still require actual observations on who attends marriage feasts. In the case of wealthy marriages, these feasts appear to be used to promote the success of families and lineages. Less ostentatious families probably use marriages to renew lineage ties and other ties in household security networks.

This brings up an important aspect of traditional feasting that we have not emphasized enough in previous discussions. Notably, that some feasts for given emic purposes such as marriages and funerals can change dramatically in function depending on the wealth of the hosts and perhaps other household attributes.

This principle is perhaps most clearly expressed in Akha funeral feasts. Previously, we argued that funerals can be and are used to advertise the success of specific households and lineages. At least among wealthy families, numbers of buffaloes are killed, silver spoons are given to the presiding shaman, and certain lineage members both contribute gifts and receive gifts. This year, we learned that for poor families, funerals take on much more the aspect of a work feast. The poor only have a feast for as many people as they can afford to feed, which generally means only those people that actually help build the coffin, dig the grave, prepare the food, and perform the ceremony.

A similar pattern probably also exists for “curing feasts,” and new house feasts. The curing feast (*Neh To To*) is not only held for people who are objectively seen to be ill. Curing feasts are also held for anyone in a family who is felt to be out of sorts or to give them a blessing, or to increase their strength, or to promote their growth, or to cheer up their creator “spirits” (the *Neh Neh* or the *Neh Zong* of each person). Clearly, this system is open to a great deal of subjective interpretation and manipulation for any family that feels they need some reason to hold a feast. And, in fact, in neither of the two curing feasts that we witnessed did the “cured” mother or child look in the least bit ill. The format of the feast follows the standard format for all interhousehold Akha feasts (including the same ordinary serving dishes and feasting liquor glasses), while the type and number of animals sacrificed varies according to the event and is determined by the *Neh Pha* or *Nhi Pha* (a lower rank trance shaman who does no actual praying)

(see also Leach 1954:192). The cost of the sacrifice tends to vary according to the wealth of the family among the Kachin, but the shaman determines these costs and thus has some control over family economics. The actual curing ceremony is preferentially performed by a higher ranking shaman with the training and authority to pray, however any family or lineage elder can perform a curing ceremony.

For our present purposes, what is more important is the actual list of guests that participate. Before the curing feasts we were given the rote reply that “all the elders” of the community would attend. While this may be an emic egalitarian ideal, it certainly does not correspond to actual behavior. In both cases that we witnessed, only a few elders were present (4 in one case, 6 in another). In one case, we were able to document that 4 of the elders were the leading figures in the host’s lineage, while the remaining 2 were leading elders from the host’s wife’s lineage. A total of 18 people participated, including children, major figures (elders and wives), and minor support personnel. The other curing feast we attended appeared very similar and probably had a similar lineage emphasis. Ralana has records of elders present at a number of feasts which we hope to analyze in the future. In brief, it appears that the key figures that are invited to curing feasts are precisely those who are most important to the household security network. Each elder, in turn, gives his blessing on the child or afflicted person. Even more importantly, to further demonstrate lineage solidarity with the family, no one in the host’s lineage or clan is supposed to have sex or to work on the day of the curing feast.

Although other important members of a household’s safety network are frequently included at these feasts, the main emphasis, as this proscription demonstrates, is clearly on the lineage. Where there is minimal lineage or other support, and where there is little wealth, curing feasts seem to be entirely a nuclear family affair, at least according to one poor household that we interviewed, where the shaman’s role was assumed by the mother.

We presume that curing feasts operate on a reciprocal basis among elders and those under their care in their lineage segments; however given the rote response that “all elders” attend all curing (and most other) feasts, this is difficult to verify. Given the potential for considerable

cost, curing feasts may also acquire strong promotional characteristics, as they certainly did among the Kachin (Leach 1954:118-20, 172). Curing feasts for children (*Ya u zong u eu*) are perhaps the closest thing to child growth feasts (see Hayden 1995) that exist among the Akha or Kachin. However, no permanent increase in the value or desirability of children seems to result from these feasts. This is consistent with the fact that little wealth is exchanged in marriage feasts. Therefore, child curing feasts do not really function as child growth feasts, and we must assume that these hill tribes simply employ alternative techniques for storing and manipulating their surpluses, such as in the form of livestock and prestige goods. Perhaps, at some transegalitarian levels, children take the place of livestock only *if* there are no domesticated animals to act as vehicles for storing surpluses (as on the American Northwest Coast) or only where marriage becomes an important vehicle for wealth exchanges and debt accumulation. It is also interesting that neither the Akha nor the Kachin have any real initiation ceremonies or feasts for adolescents (Leach 1954:134-5) perhaps due to the traditional early ages at marriage, i.e., marriage feasts also fulfilling initiation functions.

The adult curing feast (*La du bue eu*) and the gratitude feast (*A ya sae phy*) appear to be the functional equivalents of the curing feast for elderly individuals in terms of creating lineage solidarity and promoting the lineage or its constituent segments. While curing ceremonies tend to emphasize children and young adults (although not restricted to them), gratitude feasts are only for lineage elders (men or women) who are not feeling well or who have problems. Gratitude feasts are only given by junior individuals to senior individuals (e.g., younger brothers to older brothers or children to parents, not vice versa). Moreover, the shaman is not a necessary or principal performer, but may attend if he is invited to pray for curing sickness of the senior person being honored. In addition, gratitude feasts should only occur if grandchildren have been born, thus assuring the viability of the lineage and giving purpose to the purported goal of the feast: to create a safety-net for members and promote desirable social relationships. The giving of the feast and the public presentation of gifts undoubtedly serves to promote the status and relative influence of the family or lineage segment.

Similarly, the very rare and very costly lineage transfer feast of an elder wife to a husband's lineage, must be viewed in terms of sheer ostentation and advertisement of success in order to secure more influence (status) for the youngest household son within a lineage or community. While a gratitude feast can be given to either the husband's or wife's parents, a lineage transfer feast only affects the husband's lineage, and is the more dramatic of the two we think. In many respects it probably plays a role similar to the White Skirted Woman's feasts that we described previously.

The other types of feasts that we now suspect of serving lineage solidarity functions are the housebuilding and work feasts, new house feasts, and possibly butcher's feasts. The scant information we have on naming feasts indicates that they are mainly for a child's grandparents and a few lineage wives. We witnessed one new house being built at Mae Salep almost entirely with volunteer lineage laborers, who were compensated with a work feast every day that they helped. A special meal was prepared consisting of dog. Although this was a special case since the house was for the *dzuma* headman, we suspect that it may typify most housebuilding undertakings. When in need of a new house, the most logical place to seek help is from one's lineage. Such help is most likely given on a reciprocal basis, except perhaps in the cases of high officials or lineage elders' houses where some helpers might be anxious to establish debts with influential or powerful people.

For normal new house feasts, we would similarly expect *invited* guests to be members of the household's principal safety net, especially the husband's lineage. However, for wealthier families, such events would obviously provide excellent opportunities for advertising success and promoting both the household and the lineage. We have every reason to believe this was the case for the *dzuma*'s new house in Mae Salep at which a cow is intended to be sacrificed.

#### CLAN SOLIDARITY FEASTS

A level of feasting that we did not clearly distinguish last year is related to the importance of wider clan relationships in social and economic security networks. We define "clan" as

patrilineally related families living in separate communities, while “lineages” are patrilineally related families living in the same community, and “lineage segments” are closely related patrilineal families sharing a common father, grandfather or great grandfather. Alting von Geusau (1983:42) defines lineages as composed of 3-9 generations while clans consist of 10-30 generations. This is probably roughly equivalent to our use of the term. The clan is important because members in this network can be a source of material assistance (they are not supposed to charge interest on loans and they assume the cost of penalties if members cannot pay fines or compensations), they can be a source of support in disputes, and they provide hospitality and immediate integration into other communities when traveling. The material and dispute assistance roles of clan members (outside the community) are probably rarely activated (although Alting von Geusau (1983:42) notes that poor people prefer to ask help from clan members in other villages), whereas the hospitality role must have been critical in the past when cash crops had to be conveyed by horse or foot and when all exchange entailed substantial travel. Perhaps it was only the more wealthy members of communities that engaged in such travel, and this may explain why they make a point of inviting members from other communities to the largest feasts that they sponsor, namely funerals, marriages, and probably other special events. Alting von Geusau (1983:42) states that traditionally, mobility was high and that hospitality might be sought not only from the husband’s clan but from the wife’s, mother’s, or grandmother’s clans as well. Clearly, it would be logistically very difficult to unite all these individuals for a feast specifically dedicated to maintaining a “visitors’ network.” However, large feasts did provide an opportunity to include widespread clan members as guests in order to reaffirm clan solidarity as a subsidiary goal of feasts primarily held for other purposes. Thus, we expect the guests from other villages invited to large feasts to be predominantly members of the household’s clans, as well as other important individuals in the hospitality or political network, such as key village administrators.

## POLITICAL CONTROL

Having made some initial observations and arguments about the nature of hill tribe political systems and the types of people drawn to them; and having discussed the importance of lineage support in situations of social or political crises, we are now ready to discuss village politics and feasting in more detail. However, one of the persistent portrayals of village political leaders both among the Akha and the Kachin contends that there are no real practical advantages either economical or political to assuming the position of headman or even chief, that there are only disadvantages (Leach 1954:155, 171-2, 182-3). As Leach (1954:182) puts it: “Why on earth were there ever candidates?” Although he argues on the negative side of practicality, his data show numerous tangible advantages as one might well expect given a situation, as he describes it, in which “everyone’s goal is to be chief.” We will review these advantages in summary form since many kinds of benefits may also be pertinent to the Akha political system.

In political terms, the chiefs, together with lineage heads and other wise men of status, were on the judiciary council of the village. This body of men decided which litigants were at fault and assessed compensations or fines which could include expulsion from the village, or even death (Leach 1954:90, 182, 184). Given the chief’s, or headman’s, central administrative role it is extremely likely that he had more influence than other council members. In fact, he made decisions in all disputes that could not be settled at lower levels of arbitration within the ruling lineage. It is also important to remember that the chief or headman was related by kinship to a large proportion of the litigants (Leach 1954:184). Thus, his political support in disputes was undoubtedly highly valued and his favor frequently curried. While all members of the judiciary council were theoretically equal, Leach repeatedly points out that egalitarian ideals rarely translated into egalitarian behavior, and we earlier cited a number of his statements that demonstrated influential or “high status” lineages had much more say in determining judiciary outcomes than lineages without much status. Leach (1954:85) states explicitly that the political hierarchy was determined by lineage rank (status) and relationships. Alting von Geusau (1983:40) similarly observed that Akha village officials identified more with the “better off” families. We suspect that these are normal states of affairs in all transegalitarian societies despite

emic ethics of equality. Moreover, as we earlier pointed out, in order to have even hereditary aristocratic claims to high “status” recognized, such claims had to be validated by holding frequent feasts, and expensive feasts at that. This obviously required wealth. Without such validation, inherited status was merely a dormant state to be passively acknowledged via lip service. It was devoid of practical consequences. Thus wealth was requisite for activating “status,” and activated “status” was little more than a euphemism for influence or power. And power was critical for maintaining or increasing wealth as the many disputes over water rights and negotiations of compensations illustrate (Leach 1954:70, 145, 148, 153, 184).

We might even suggest that the many elaborate taboos and heavy fines for “transgressions” of etically minor significance may have been devised by those in power in order to exert power over a wide spectrum of village households, thereby exerting control over the economic and political fortunes of a large proportion of the village. Although fines and compensations were standardized by tradition, in reality, decisions on the seriousness of offenses and the appropriate punishment were open to debate and negotiation. Fines were undoubtedly of much less consequence for families of “high status” or those well connected to influential members of the council (Leach 1954:90, 145, 148, 153, 184). If this seems overly Machievellian, it is worth asking who initially formulated the dictates concerning the appropriate respect for elders, having twins, viewing jealous speech and slander as sorcery (Leach 1954:167, 179), on hunting or cutting wood in sacred groves, on bearing children before marriage, and so on. Among the Chinese Akha (Hani), there are 15-100 days of taboos, the breaking of which is a serious, para-criminal offense which threatens disaster for the entire village. Failure to observe prescribed sacrifices is viewed as having similar potential malevolent effects. Transgressions can be dealt with by a range of measures from symbolical disapproval to fines, removal of fingers, eyes, or ears, expulsion, or even death, depending on the judged severity of the offense (Zhang and Lu 1993:3-4, 8-9). Retributions also vary according to the person involved. Who enforces and maintains these codes of conduct? The village council. Almost all of what has been said about the very important political advantages of political office and being a lineage

elder applies just as well to the Akha as to the Kachin. The Akha *dzuma* even has an hereditary status like aristocratic Kachin chiefs. The overall political structure of Akha and Kachin villages can be represented schematically as shown in Figure 2.

The political structure of the Chinese Akha also conforms to this model and provides even further details of its functioning. Here the *dzuma* is the main figure in charge of making sacrifices for the good of the village (also a means of obtaining control over some surpluses). He is also in charge of settling disputes and taboo transgressions. He and the village council decide on penalties for transgressions of tribal law, and they implement those decisions (Zhang and Lu 1993:3-4, 7-8). Moreover, the *dzuma* often uses palm-reading to arrive at his decisions, which must provide ample opportunity to manipulate outcomes. To reinforce the authority of these decisions, the *dzuma* is portrayed as “god’s mouthpiece.” Also relevant is the observation that the *dzuma* and other community “leaders” had to be prosperous and have many children and grandchildren, we suggest, to create powerful lineages that could dominate village politics (Lii 1993:6).

The main differences between the Kachin and the Akha in the exercise of political power is that the Akha do not recognize debt servitude (“slavery”) as a form of compensation, nor do they generally tolerate the use of violence by any administrators, something which Kachin chiefs are specifically empowered to use (Leach 1954:155, 185). But, there are very significant practical political benefits associated with the traditional role of both Akha and Kachin chiefs. Despite Leach’s protests to the contrary, there are also very significant economical benefits for Kachin political leaders. These are:

1) having other villagers build his field hut, sow his swidden, and do other swidden work without any reciprocal obligation (Leach 1954:121, 129, 134);

2) having villagers build and maintain his house with no reciprocal obligation (Leach 1954:117);

3) receiving 1-2 baskets of paddy tribute from each household and other unspecified “taxes” from commoners (Leach 1954:121, 187, 200);

4) receiving tribute from trading caravans crossing controlled territory and from the extraction of minerals (jade, silver, iron) from the polity territory (Leach 1954:188, 224-6);

5) receiving a leg of all wild or domestic animals killed, which despite Leach's dismissal as more symbolic than economic, must have amounted to considerable amounts of meat especially when buffalo or cattle were involved (Leach 1954:121, 204);

6) receiving higher payments for debt settlements (like functioning elites in other transegalitarian or stratified societies—Leach 1954:187, 205);

7) receiving gifts from inferiors, like functioning elites in other stratified societies (Leach 1954:163); and

8) the probable use of produce from the communal rice field (Leach 1954:134).

Leach argues that many of these benefits are not real economic advantages since *most* of the rice received in tribute (and presumably from the communal fields) must be used to host the feasts that the chief must give, and since any gifts (legs of animals, gifts from inferiors) are supposed to entail even higher value return gifts. However, Leach's claim of economic disadvantages for chiefs (and by extension for all people in positions of power) simply does not add up with the known facts. The chiefs, it is true, had great expenses, but their positions must have generally enabled them to reap even greater revenues as indicated by the above list of benefits, as indicated by the fact that most slaves were owned by chiefs (some communities were composed of up to 45% slaves), and as indicated by the fact that men without sufficient wealth to pay bride prices and obtain wives would "sell" themselves to chiefs or rich men who would pay the bride prices for them (Leach 1954:160, 169, 245, 256). In fact, it may be that those in power kept pushing bride prices to higher and higher levels precisely so that they could disenfranchise poorer members of the community (including their own kin) and thus exert power over them, as is common in Africa (Meillassoux 1981; La Fontaine 1985:143-5, 153-5). While some chiefs may have been poor due to ineptitude, poor luck, or other adverse circumstances (just as some capitalists go bankrupt), the majority must have hoped to, or expected to, benefit both politically and economically from their positions most of the time, even if some of the benefits only lay in

the realm of “potential” benefits. The lure of the top position was probably the *chance* to manipulate the system, to play the political game, to have a shot at acquiring great power and reaping major benefits. This, too, is the lure of the capitalist system. We suspect that Leach relied too heavily on emic ideals and speculation about what chiefs were “supposed” to give back to inferiors according to emic theories, rather than on actual observations of what was given back, which in most cases were probably political favors and some food at feasts. Moreover, it is clear that political heads appropriated undetermined amounts of produce from the paddy tribute and probably from communal field produce that was supposed to be used for village feasts. Also, the mere fact that they controlled how these surpluses were used was an important source of power itself. In all these domains, chiefs and others in power must have sought to maximize their own economic and political benefits, as Leach (1954:87, 171) himself states.

Similarly, when Leach (1954:173) claims that livestock are not of economic value since they are only used in sacrifices (feasts) and since the meat is widely shared around at these feasts, this is a gross distortion of the facts as Leach (1954:154) himself indicates elsewhere. Livestock, especially buffalo, are the main items of wealth in Katchim society and they are the main form of surplus production. Strictly speaking, they are not even necessary for the subsistence economy. Wealthy people have livestock, poor people do not (Leach 1954:71). The rich can use livestock sacrifices in feasts in order to create strong reciprocal social relationships with other members of the community or to contract marriages and thus gain political support and power, or “buy power.” This power and control over labor (indebted servitude) can then be used to establish or acquire productive land (paddy) or other wealth producing resources, to acquire wives, and to win in conflicts. The system has the potential for growing in a positive feed-back fashion, except for several major constraints. The major constraint as emphasized by both Leach (1954:171) and Alting von Geusau (1983:34) is the ability of people simply to opt out of debt situations that become too oppressive or disadvantageous. Families either move out where there is low population density and abundant land, or they revolt and overthrow oppressive people in power, frequently killing them. The overall productivity of the environment

(including proceeds from trade caravans and mineral extraction) must be viewed as the major constraint on how much surplus households can reliably produce and how much debt they are willing to support. Given these constraints (and the absence of warfare to force households into dependency on brokers of power for defense), it appears that the only strategies that can effectively be used to build political power are feasting and marriage wealth exchanges (bride prices), and other *voluntary* debt relations that people must be lured into.

The key question in such a system, and a question that neither Leach nor other ethnographers address, is what sets the constraints on the acquisition of wealth initially, for wealth is the key to offering sacrifices (feasting) and establishing social rank, social support, and political power. The ability to raise pigs and cattle (and produce enough food for a large family) are obviously the most critical elements in feasting, marriage, debt-creation, and the acquisition of prestige wealth. However, we have as yet been unable to determine why, in some areas, rich families have only 2-3 buffalo instead of 20-30 as in other areas, or why poor families or indebted families cannot raise buffalo through borrowing or other means. Since the general Southeast Asian pattern seems to be that forage resources for pigs and cattle are unrestricted within the community range and open to all, and since little manpower seems to be required for raising livestock, why do more households not have more livestock, more wealth, and more equitable power? One suggestion by a Vietnamese ethnographer, is that “poor” people have adequate subsistence that does not differ significantly from the rich (also noted by Leach 1954:72) and that they are simply not interested in the social and political “games” that the “rich” are fond of playing. They therefore do not put out the extra effort of raising cattle or many other animals. If they do, they keep the benefits for themselves and a small group of intimate friends or kin, rather than trying to expand their spheres of social and political influence. Or they prefer to focus their resources on more introverted activities such as the use of opium or alcohol. As Alting von Geusau (1983:39, 42) notes, wealth is relatively easy to build up, even if most families are poor. The main determinants are labor (having sufficient children) and the quality of the labor (being willing to work hard). Being a member of a founding lineage of a

community may also be critical for retaining usufruct rights to large tracts of good land (e.g., Zhang and Lu 1993:5; Leach 1954:155). The promotion of bride wealth is probably one means the rich and powerful use to “up the ante,” that is, to try to compel reluctant families to play the social political game or pay a higher cost in consequences. This explanation would certainly be in accord with the general assumptions that we initially outlined concerning the range of motivations that probably characterize all human populations. It is also consistent with experience in contemporary societies where not all individuals are motivated by money or power, and some do not seem to be interested in performing any work at all no matter what the potential benefits. But for those who are highly motivated to acquire wealth and power, we still do not understand very well what constrains production of the commodities that are necessary to achieve these ends.

Many aspects of political power may depend on given factors such as age, the number of other lineage families resident in one’s village, and hereditary lineage status. These factors are difficult to alter by ambitious individuals, as is characteristic of true egalitarian societies, and may account for observations by Leach (1954:162) and Alting von Geusau (1983:39) to the effect that village officials are not necessarily rich. However, the new element that transegalitarian systems add to this mix is that they enable ambitious and skilled individuals to use economic surplus production to overcome some of the qualities traditionally required for power that might be lacking from birth—this is not very different from more recent practices of buying aristocratic titles, except that in tribal contexts, power accompanies the titles. In fact, recognition of all elite or power positions in transegalitarian societies is dependent on validation requiring the expenditure of wealth.

What parts of this discussion are relevant to the Akha? There are many. We have already dealt with the advantages of political control. Like the Kachin chiefs, the Akha *dzuma* form a hereditary group of people, but assumption of the *dzuma* role must be validated and ratified by the council of elders. Like the Kachin chiefs, the *dzuma* also has a right to a leg of all wild animals killed, although for domestic animals killed for profane profit, he and other council

members are only invited to a feast that the butchers must give for them. The *dzuma* is also invited to each household for a meal after the New Rice harvest and receives a small portion from each family's maize harvest. These and many other feasting or cultural features show the strong historical and cultural links between the Akha and the Kachin, e.g., the Sacred Grove, the offerings to the Lords of Water and Earth, the use of attached granaries for adolescents and their paramours, the curing sacrifices, the display of buffalo horns for ostentation, the short ancestor span in ancestor worship, ancestor altars, the justification of the headman's authority and his role in village feasts, the generation of village funds controlled by village administrators, the ranking of lineages, the composition and functioning of the judicial and executive village council, similarities in traditional customs and penalties for transgressions, the similar egalitarian ethic with its contradictions in actual behavior, the high levels of competition, the instability of egalitarianism under resource conditions that favor the emergence of greater concentration of political and economic power. Similarly, traditionally, the Akha did not raise animals for subsistence purposes, but only so that they would have animals to sacrifice when the need (e.g., for curing) or desire (for creating social and political safety nets) arose. Moreover, "The village leaders and the priest...seem to have had a tendency to identify more with 'up' (better off families) than with 'down'" (Alting von Geusau 1983:40) among the Akha.

### Political Feasts

If the scenario that we have just outlined bears some resemblance to the way actual village political power was and is wielded, then we should expect to find the principal political figures involved in some significant feasts both among themselves for solidarity purposes and among factional allies and constituents (supporters). As we have already discussed, the major constituents of elders are other members of their lineage. Lineage centered feasts (curing, new house, gratitude, marriage, funeral) create and maintain this support network. These same feasts also appear to have been used to create and maintain inter-lineage alliances (or factions) within communities. For instance, at the curing feasts that we documented earlier, most elders were

from the Latchay lineage, but there were also several elders from the Labou lineage that participated as principal figures. There were no other participating elders from other lineages. As Maneprasert (1988:2) previously documented, the Latchay and Labou lineages have formed an alliance that has controlled village politics in recent years. Other opportunities that occur for consolidating or creating political factions through feasting include the butcher's feast which can easily be used by wealthy individuals to hold a feast whenever politically expedient and to invite the most powerful village authorities as well as selected allied elders. Since only wealthy families can afford to hold butcher's feasts frequently, they can significantly increase their close relationships with the most influential administrators and/or with allied lineages or elders by this means. Unfortunately we lack specific actual details, although it is clear that elders who attend such feasts have strong social contacts with the host, while attendance is optional for the *dzuma*.

In terms of creating solidarity or mutual support among the village council, there are feasts, probably of a relatively intimate nature, every time the council comes together to deal with issues. These usually occur at the *dzuma*'s house and all expenses for the feasts given at the *dzuma*'s house (with the two exceptions mentioned below) are compensated (or overcompensated) for from the village fund. These expenses are considered to be the responsibility of the villagers (Fig. 3), however, we currently lack further details. In addition to these periodic village council meetings, there are calendrical feasts at the *dzuma*'s house which are paid for from the village fund (the *Pu chi phu bae*, "pocket money") or by contributions from households. These feasts are both political feasts and village solidarity feasts. They publicly display the lineage elders' (and other villagers') support of the *dzuma*. They include the annual swinging ceremony, the New Year ceremony, and the Yo la la (Fig. 3).

Consistent with the public village ideology of non-exploitation, the *dzuma* must also publicly reaffirm his commitment to the welfare of the village council, elders, and others by giving a public feast for them two times a year at his house using his own resources (at the "Red Egg" new year festival and the New Rice harvest). The *dzuma*'s feast at these events may be mostly symbolical of the inauguration of a more general feasting season, since a number of

auxilliary feasts in various houses usually follow the feast at the *dzuma*'s house which is attended principally by elders and councilors. At the New Rice festival, especially, most households have their own auxilliary feasts to which close social affiliates and the *dzuma* are invited. Auxilliary feasts also occur after the Yo la la festival, which is held for the emic purpose of thanking the *dzuma*'s supernatural spirit. All other public feasts are paid for from the village funds. See our 1995 report for a more complete discussion of the Akha calendrical feasts. Here, it is useful to add that although all elders are entitled to attend the council feasts, not all of them do and it is still unclear as to why this is so. It may be that some elders feel that their lineage strength and wealth is so inferior to that of others' that they have no effective power in the council; it may be that some elders are simply not interested in politics; it may be that there has been a twin birth in the lineage or a divorce between their lineage and a more powerful lineage, thus motivating them to withdraw from presence at the council; or other factors may be involved. This is clearly an area that requires further investigation.

Auxilliary feasts involve the prolongation of some of the major village feasts and can be viewed as essentially political in nature. After the main feasting event at the *dzuma*'s house, other council members can invite the council to go to their houses for feasts at the Red Egg (new year) and Yo la la festivals. These auxilliary hosts are generally rich people who presumably want to maintain or increase their influence in the council. Such auxiliary feasts are accompanied by a procession of musicians and dancers, but more details are again required to fully interpret the role of these feasts.

#### VILLAGE SOLIDARITY FEASTS

Finally, we discuss the village support network. As both we and Alting von Geusau (1983:42) have noted, the lineage and the clan are both much more important than the village in terms of sharing and assistance. As we argued previously, there are still some residual practical or safety-net functions of the village, although these were undoubtedly much more pronounced in the past when feuding and warfare was a factor of much greater importance (Leach 1954:92,

153, 158, 186, 198, 202), although occasional attacks on villages have even occurred as recently as 1990. Today, while there are several events during the year which are declared village celebrations (also discussed under political feasts), there is no real village-wide communal feast. Instead, at best, the heads of each household are entitled to share a meal at the *dzuma*'s house, and each household may purchase one or more shares in village sacrifices sponsored by the village officials, but the meat from these sacrifices is taken to each individual house to be prepared and eaten as part of a household meal. Cattle or buffalo are used for these less formal public celebrations while pigs and chickens are used for the more sacred festivals (Fig. 3). Similarly, at the swinging events, the only feasting that traditionally occurs is among the elders. They, plus the administrators of the village, are the ritual participants in the actual swinging. However, swinging is particularly popular among the young, and a secondary swing is erected for them as well as many other smaller swings at individual houses purely for amusement, and perhaps to show support for traditional Akha values.

#### VARIABILITY IN FEASTING BETWEEN HOUSEHOLDS

We have previously mentioned that some feasts such as funerals take on different roles for poor and rich households, and it is evident that elders or administrators have very different feasting involvements from more junior lineage households. However, there is more to be said about the variability of feasting behavior between houses. In particular, the relative wealth, social role, and lineage (political) connections appear to play even more critical roles than we have so far indicated. For instance in one household near the poorest end of the village spectrum at Mae Salep, a widow and her children were viewed as "squatters" without any kin or lineage support. Widows cannot generally represent households in public affairs. In the last two years no one in the family (including a 26 year old son) went to any marriage or funeral feasts because they had to work. The only curing ceremonies they attended were small affairs that they performed themselves in their own household. There was no butchering feast and no other feasts

were attended (although, we could not successfully convey the notion of the curing or ancestral feasts at that household).

In contrast, an equally poor family with perhaps more cash crops and membership in the dominant lineage at Mae Salep held 12 ancestral feasts in the last year as well as 3 curing feasts at which 5 elders attended, plus one gratitude feast and one naming feast at which his parents and 2 lineage wives were present. The household head also participated in the annual gate building feast (contributing a chicken), New Year's feast (at which 3 shares of meat were bought), and attended the swinging ceremony. Clearly, even though not an economically ambitious household, the members are very well connected to a lineage and political support network and are striving to maintain those connections.

At the other end of the spectrum is one of the richest households in Mae Salep, that of one of the founding elders and a member of the dominant Latchay lineage (?). This household held 12 ancestral feasts in the last year, held 3 or 4 curing feasts and attended "every" other curing feast in the village, held a major butcher's feast, and 2 years ago held a major marriage feast for a son that lasted 2 days. Data on attending other marriage and funeral or other feasts are lacking, but it seems highly likely that the household heads attended many other feasts of all varieties. Not only do these observations support many of the arguments and aspects of the model that we have presented, they also provide even clearer insights into how feasting integrates the social and political and economic safety net and support network. Rich households without kin may be able to buy influence and security, and poor households with good lineage connections may be able to achieve security by supporting lineage leaders and indebting themselves to those leaders, but poor families without kin connections are usually in dire straits.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

While we previously stressed the fact that few special serving vessels were used in any Akha feasts (alcohol glasses were the only item noted), it should be stressed here that material culture is today undergoing very rapid change which may have a blurring effect on traditional

material patterns of use and ownership. For instance, Alting von Geusau (1983:24) observed that wealthy families had metal pots and cups rather than ceramic or bamboo ones. Such a distinction is impossible to make today due to the ready availability of all materials and the complete abandonment of traditional bamboo cups, bowls, and plates. If such material differences between rich and poor were typical of the past (e.g., ceramic vs. bamboo serving vessels), we might also expect them to have occurred in some of the more competitive or promotional feasting contexts as well.

Another issue involves the widespread borrowing of food preparation and serving vessels especially for large but infrequent feasts. While this may blur material patterning on an individual household basis, it would still not obscure the fact that on a village or regional basis, substantial feasting was occurring (as inferrable from large preparation vessels, prestige items, and domesticated animals). Moreover, houses sponsoring frequent and large feasts would still be expected to own, break, and discard significantly more, larger, and better feasting associated items than poor households with fewer and more minor feasts thus revealing the fact that real socioeconomic inequalities existed in these communities. If one wishes to argue that prestige items such as gongs, swords, silver spoons, bronze kettles, and jewelry, or domestic animals do not necessarily indicate feasting or its associated rituals, the transegalitarian ethnographic record speaks empirically for itself. These and other similar prestige items are everywhere intimately tied to feasting contexts and behavior in the transegalitarian world. We can think of no exceptions. The economic use of prestige items outside of feasting contexts and the consumption of domestic animals as staple daily foods are recent developments made possible only by high levels of wealth associated with states. They are transegalitarian aberrancies.

More problematical is the use of large food preparation vessels for the preparation of food for pigs. However, even here, the ultimate aim is to prepare food (pork) for feasts, and we suspect that the initial, and still primary, function of large pots is for preparing human feasting foods. Moreover, there are some preparation vessel types such as woks, that seem to be used

exclusively for preparing human foods and which clearly vary in size according to the size of the consuming group.

While most of the observations on the disposal of animal parts from curing or dispute resolution or other ritual contexts seem too particularistic to be of general use in interpreting prehistoric remains, one pattern does seem to be consistent and widespread. That is, the display of teeth or horns or skulls of the highest prestige animals consumed in feasts. While such displays appear very common in many places in the world, it is much more difficult to document the ultimate disposal patterns of such prestige displays. In the only case documented to date (in Vietnam) the buffalo horns accumulated by a headman from successive village sacrifices were simply left in the debris of his old house when he moved the village to a new location. The prestige from the old village could not be transferred to the new.

Thus, we are optimistic that the varying kinds of feasting behavior that we have discussed in this report will be detectable in the material remains of prehistoric communities of the area as well.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### FIGURE CAPTIONS

Fig. 1. A schematic representation of the functions of Akha feasts at varying levels of inclusivity.

Fig. 2. A schematic portrayal of political power in Akha communities. This structure may typify transegalitarian communities in general throughout Southeast Asia.

**Figure 3**  
**Feasting Attributes**

Feast Types	Hierarchy	Reciprocal	Public	Witnessing Accounting	Specialty Foods	Special Serving Vessels	Gifts	Conspicuous Waste	Size	Contributors	Guests	Organizer	Emic Rational
Solidarity	-	n/a	-	-	P	P	P	-	Small ↘ Large	All	-	Group Head	Ancestors, Gods, Spirits, Weddings, Funerals
Sollicitation	+	-	-	-	+	P	P	-	Small	Petitioner	Patron	Petitioner	Obtain Specific Goal
Reciprocal	- or +	+	+	+	+	+	P	- or +	Multi-Family ↘ Multi-Village	All Hosts	Allied Group	Group Head	Obtain: Allies Mates
Political Support	+	P	-	+ or -	+ ?	P	P	-	Small ↘ Large	Power-Seekers and Backers	Cronie ↘ Villages	Politically Ambitious	Gods, Allies, Mates, Weddings, Funerals
Political Position	+	-	+	+	+	P	P	P	Large	"	Elites ↘ Village	Office Seekers	Gods, Spirits, Funerals
Promotion	+ or -	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	Large	All Hosts	Potential Members or Allies	Group Head	Weddings, Funerals, Ancestors, Ritual Installation, Child Maturation
Competitive	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	++	Large	Power Seekers and Backers	Rivals	Big Men	Prestige, Status, Investment, Funerals
Work	+	-	+ or -	-	P	-	-	-	Small ↘ Large	Under-Writers	Workers	Patron	Work

P = Possible

**Figure 4**  
**Material Indicators**

Feast Types	Location	Special Structures	Hearth Size	Specialized Food Preparation Vessels	Size of Food Preparation Vessels	Number of Food Preparation Vessels	Serving Vessels			Waste
							Quality	Size	Number	
Solidarity		?	Small ↘ Large	?	Small ↘ Large	Few Per Household	Normal ↘ High	Small ↘ Large	Low ↘ High	Low
Sollicitation		-	Small	-	Small	Few	High	Small	Low	Low
Reciprocal		?	Large	P	Large	Many	Normal ↘ High	Some Large	High	Low
Political Support		?	Small ↘ Large	P	Small ↘ Large	Moderate ↘ Many	Normal ↘ High	Small ↘ Large	Low ↘ High	Low
Political Position		+	Large	P	Large	Many	Some High	Some Large	High	High
Promotion		?	Large	+	Large	Many	Some High	Some Large	High	High
Competitive		+	Large	P	Large	Many	Some High	Some Large	High	High
Work		-	Small ↘ Large	P	Small ↘ Large	Few ↘ Many	Normal	Small ↘ Large	Low ↘ High	Low

P = Possible

**Figure 5**  
**Akha Feasting Types**

Social Unit Size	Solidarity	Promotional	Reciprocal	Competitive Political	Political	Work	Solicitation
Clan	Funeral		Funeral Marriage				
Village	Red Egg New Year Gate Rebuilding Lords of Earth & Water Swinging Expelling Wild Animals Yo la la		Yo la la Red Egg New Year			Path repair	Government development activities
Political Cliques	Administrator & elder feasts?	Auxilliary feasts	Yolala Payback		Administrator/elders		
Lineage	Curing Marriage Funeral New House? Naming?	New House? Curing Funeral A ya sae phu (Gratitude) Lineage Transfer	Funeral A ya sae phu	Funeral	Funeral Gratitude? Aya Sa Phu (Gratitude)	Housebuilding	Gratitude?
Household	9 Ancestral feasts White Skirted Woman's feast Naming? New Rice Harvest	Marriage A ya sae phu Curing Naming? Funeral	Funeral A ya sae phu New Rice Blacksmith?			Funeral (poor)	
Individual	Guest feast	A ya sae phu Butcher's?	Butcher's?		Butcher's?	Butcher's	Permissions

**Figure 3**  
**Some Akha Feast Animals, Locations, and Funding**

Ritual	Animal Used	Characteristic of Feasts	Place	Source of Funds
1. Red Egg New Year	pig	sacred	<i>dzoe ma's</i> house	<i>dzoe ma's</i> family
2. Offering to Lords of water and land	pig and chickens	sacred	sacred bush of village	village fund
3. Gate building	chicken	sacred	village gates	village fund
4. Swinging	buffalo or cattle	celebratory	<i>dzoe ma's</i> house	shares bought by households
5. New Year festival	cattle	celebratory	<i>dzoe ma's</i> house	shares bought by households
6. yaw (go) la la	pig	sacred	<i>dzoe ma's</i> house	village fund
7. Auxillary feast in yaw la la	no	semi-sacred	host household	host household
8. New rice harvest	pig	sacred	<i>dzoe ma's</i> house	<i>dzoe ma's</i> family
9. Auxillary feast in New rice harvest	chicken	semi-sacred	host household	host household
10. Auxillary feast in Red Egg New Year	no	semi-sacred	host household	host household

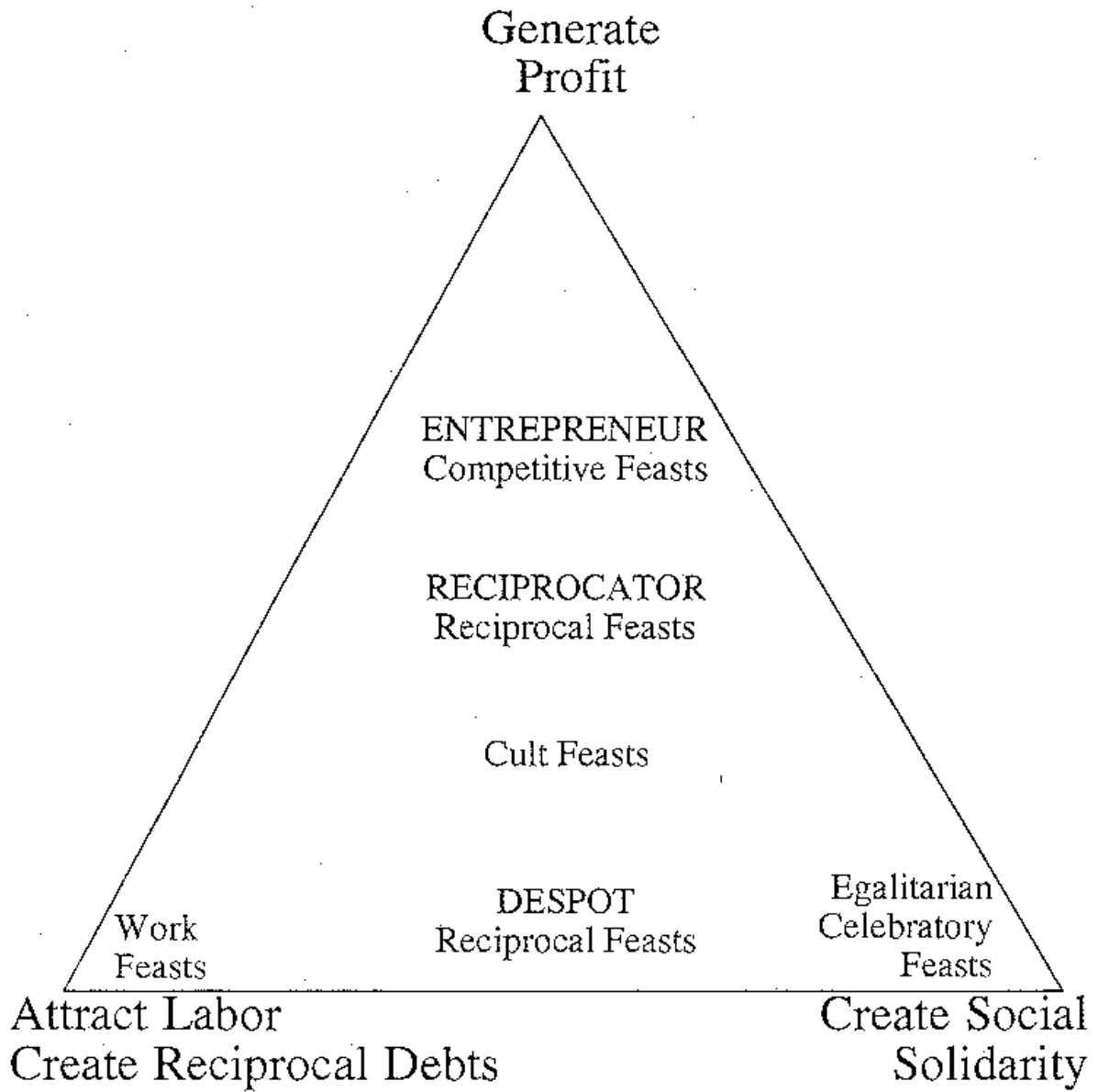


Figure 2

Figure 1

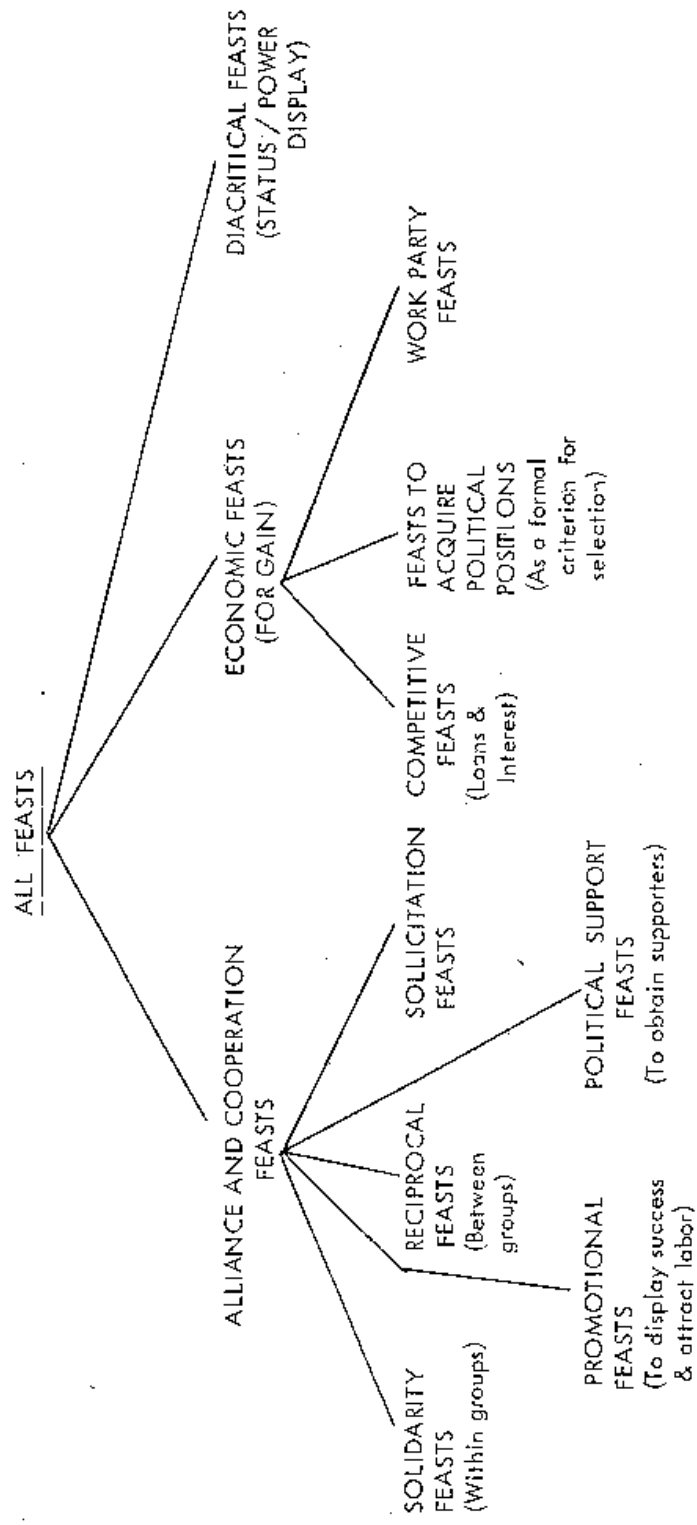
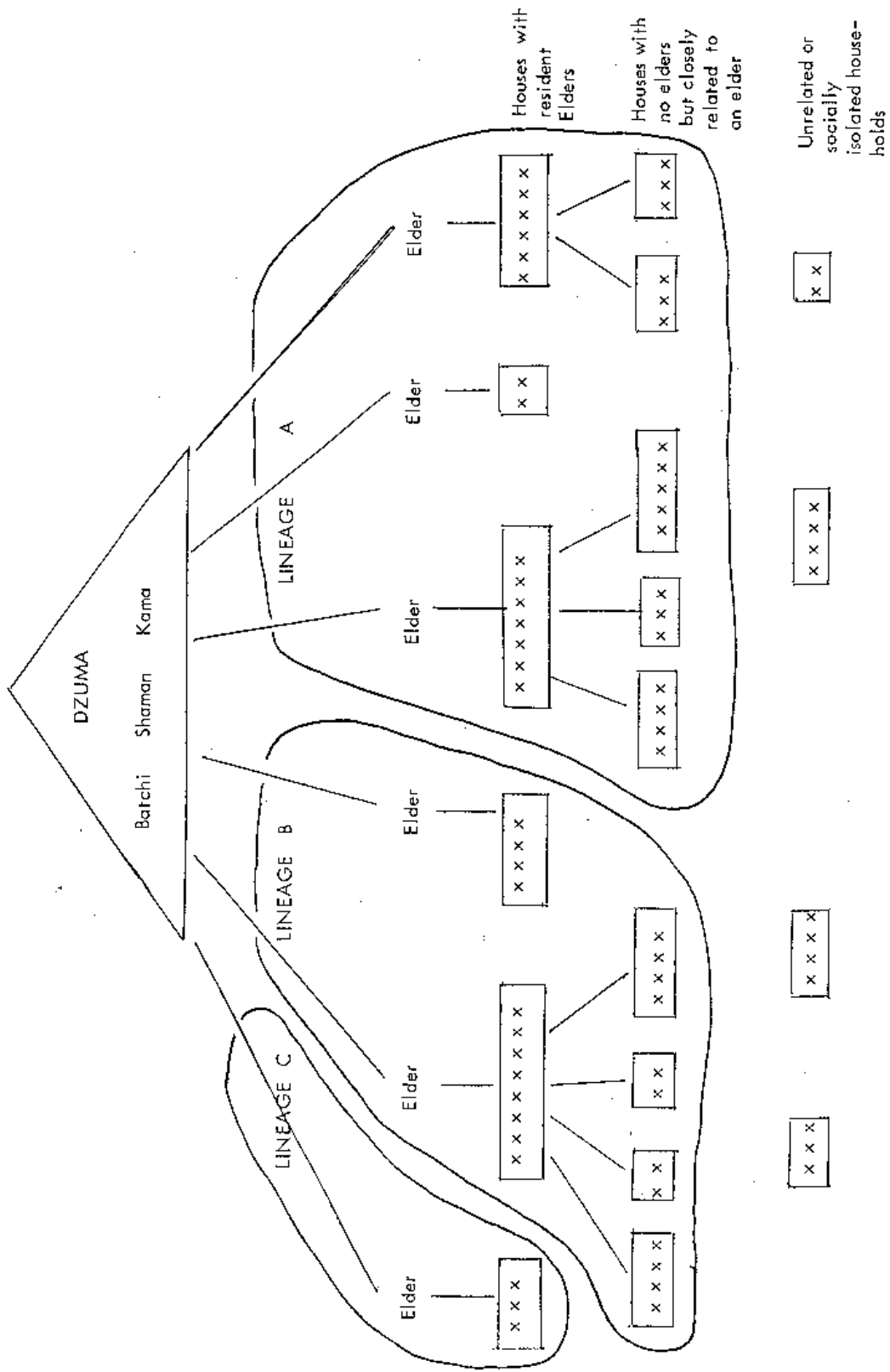




Figure 5. General Southeast Asian Structure of Political Organization



Houses with resident Elders

Houses with no elders but closely related to an elder

Unrelated or socially isolated house-holds

x = individuals