Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm

SHELLY ERRINGTON

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The Ancestor is immobile, static, potent, without disturbance. The aim of political life, an aim always defeated—by the incest tabu, by human turpitude, by the stance of siri', which all guarantee movement—is to reach perfect stasis, perfect unity. The aim of politics is to transcend politics. The paradox, as I have outlined in many ways already, is that all politics, life, events, are disturbance. Here I want to summarize and recapitulate some insights concerning the shape of "space" in Luwu and other Southeast Asian realms, its centering and de-centering, in order to take political processes one step further, to transcendent emptiness.

Order and the Other

The image of the ruler in the navel of the universe is one of virtual immobility. The image of the orderly polity—in which everyone enacts his or her place and nothing disturbs the realization of that order—is a powerful one in the political and artistic forms (which are the same thing) of the ranked polities of Southeast Asia. One of the most well known of these artistic forms is the Javanese shadow-puppet dramas, called *wayang kulit*. The *lakon* (plays or stories, but literally "steps") begin and end with the image of the rich, fertile, and peaceable Nagara ("kingdom") of (for instance) Nganarta, in which everyone and everything are in their proper places. (Recall that the term for "order" in Javanese is the name for the hierarchical arrangement of people around the ruler.) The lakon that takes place between the beginning and ending image is an enactment or playing out of a disturbance, which is eventually squelched or absorbed by the superior spiritual potency of the court of Nganarta, allowing order once more to be established in the land.

These lakon occur, A. L. Becker has pointed out, in space: the movement of the "steps" is from the orderly court to the outside (the forest, or an enemy kingdom), where conflict and movement, metaphorical and physical, occur; and then back again to the inside, where spiritual potency (for both the audience and the puppet characters) is regained and brought to a higher level by having met and overcome a challenge (cf. Becker 1971,

1979). Becker's point is well taken. But let us now imagine for a moment that the lakon of wayang occur within time rather than within space. After all, there is a narrative structure of sorts within a lakon, and movement from place to place occurs sequentially. First, we will substitute the word "duration" for the word "time," so that we can understand it as a medium in which events can occur rather than as a way of conceptualizing the structure of the past.

If we view the wayang as a depiction of the processes that take place within duration, then we can say that the sequential process it depicts is oscillation. One pole is perfect order, together with its corollary, prosperity and wealth: this is the still place at the lakon's beginning and end. The other pole images its opposite: the challenge, the movement, the disorder and fighting that take place in the lakon's middle sequence, outside the court's center. The events generated by humans and their activities oscillate between those two conditions. Challenge generates disorder; squelching a challenge is equivalent to re-establishing order. There is no "progress," nor any "time" as we conceptualize it: for what are "progress" and "time" except the notion that the world turns into something that it was not, and that human events are following a path whose end is unknown? The analogues of time and human history do not go anywhere in the lakon's depiction (and therefore are not analogues): that is why the lakon must finish where it began, spatially and metaphorically.

In human life, the nearest approximation of the perfect order depicted in dramas and texts was the ceremonial order re-created in the massive state ceremonies. On a smaller scale, cosmological order was and is reproduced within the groupings of leaders and followers called kapolo in Luwu during ceremonies "owned" by the inner core, and on yet smaller scales, in the ceremonies of lower nobles and finally of commoners.

No wonder that the Opu Pa'Bicara and his wife said to me that their ceremonies take place without force or effort, "otomatis." If everything happens "automatically," it means that everyone knows their places and performs the duties associated with it. It means that they enact their places, thus embodying and recreating order publicly. It means that there is no challenge. It means that nothing happens. That is to say, nothing untoward happens; nothing disturbs the order. A perfectly ordered ceremony exhibits dynamic stasis.

Such ceremonies do not depict order iconically, by showing what it is like. They are not mere tableaux vivants, pageants of noisy color. They are political contests. As such they are not representations of "order" but exemplars of it.

The extent of the kapolo, I have pointed out, is made visible on the

occasions of ceremonies. The internal organization of the kapolo is predicated upon graduated difference ("hierarchy"). On certain occasions, the high inner core and the least and most peripheral follower are fused together—a fusion made possible precisely because of internal ranking—into a single entity that acts as one in opposition to a rival. Such occasions formerly came about when followers fought together under their ToMatoa during a skirmish or war, or, now as then, when they work together under their ToMatoa's direction for his glory (which is their own) in a ceremony that he "owns." Those occasions are charged with great emotional intensity. People are fused into a single social body, a "one-ness" (paseddi). The appropriate emotion that kapolo members should feel is solidarity together against the "guests," the ToLaing, the Other. They must guard their siri', which is the siri' of the entire kapolo.

Ceremonies are always tense, because ToLaing are continually assessing their treatment by the host and other guests in order to judge how much deference the host gives them, especially in relation to other "guests." ToLaing are also closely observing the host's control of his own kapolo members, other guests, and the situation as a whole in order to assess the host's strength or weakness and perhaps discover an opportunity to insist on more deference. The host, in turn, wants to extend as little deference to his rivals, the guests, as possible without being called on it. He also wants to prevent the guests from exhibiting any overt hostility toward each other. Any outbreak of hostility would reflect badly on the host's control of the situation, hence of his claim to potency and deference.

Overt hostility or show of weapons is completely prohibited in the presence of a person higher than oneself. Any outbreak would demonstrate the higher person's weakness, a vulnerability to attack. (That is one reason that lower nobles feel relieved and grateful if their own ToMatoa comes to the ceremonies that they own. The presence of such an elevated personage not only is a sign of favor, but also helps keep everything safe and smooth. For the same reason, very high nobles are honored and pleased if a member of the ruler's immediate family comes to ceremonies they put on.) But even given the status-similarity of host and guests, for a host to be unable to control his own ceremony would demonstrate, if nothing else, that he was too weak to prevent it. It would be humiliating, an indication that the host had incorrectly assessed his own status with respect to a guest, or the statuses of guests with respect to each other, thus offering a guest an opportunity to object in a situation where the host's own political potency was too weak to prevent the objection from occurring. In Luwu, prevention is the greater part of valor: to ensure that no opposition arises is the greatest victory. (To go back to the shadow-puppet theater: in the most secure

kingdom, nothing would happen at all. There could be no drama. And there would be no "history," no events.)

My larger point throughout this book has been that fusion into oneness is made possible by the presence of ToLaing; indeed, it occurs because of it. Any given ceremony is preceded and succeeded by ceremonies "owned" by rivals. Its meaning must be understood to be constructed in a context in which reciprocal opposition is one of the motives for living. To converse there must be an Other, or else one is talking to oneself. Similarly, ceremonies in South Sulawesi are demonstrations to the Other, who serves as both audience and rival. Life can hardly be conducted in South Sulawesi without an Other, to whom demonstrating one's "place" motivates what we would call "political" action.

Staying in Place While Moving Around

Space in Luwu is of two types: safe and dangerous. Safe space is safe because it has a protecting center. Dangerous space is space inhabited by ToLaing. A journey into the space defined by ToLaing requires preparation if one is to remain salama', safe/healthy. Before journeying into dangerous space, people examine their own bodies for omens (what side they wake up on, whether their eyes twitch, etc.). On the road, they continue to pay close attention to good and bad omens. It is on a journey that one must be especially alert and on guard, ready for attacks from ToLaing and ready to attack ToLaing at the slightest provocation (the best defense). Still, one must sleep and one cannot be always alert. So, far more than within one's own village, certainly more than within one's own house, people on dangerous journeys take talismans for protection, "an umbrella before it rains," as one man put it.

The fact that journeys are dangerous does not mean that Bugis-Makassarese do not travel. Quite the contrary: they relish the dangers, which test their mettle and which they delight in overcoming. Bugis-Makassarese are known throughout the archipelago as brave and fierce sailors and traders. They travel in groupings that consist of an acknowledged leader and several lower followers. When the journey is made by lower nobles and commoners, it is conceptualized as beginning and ending in their own locality, even if years should elapse between their leaving and returning.

Commoners tend to identify themselves as being of a particular locality: "I am a person of Belopa." When asked about their origins, they do not recount stories of Batara Guru and the founding of Luwu—those are matters too remote, too elevated, and too arcane. Their knowledge, rather, is of the local ancestor and spirits who dwell in nearby hills or mountains

visible from their houses. Commoners' place in geography and society is restricted to a single locality, which formerly would have been, at best, in the serving group of a local arajang. When I say that the place of commoners is restricted, I mean it only in one sense: not that they do not travel, which they are famous for doing, but that, when they do travel, they travel into the realm of ToLaing. The space occupied by ToLaing, from the perspective of a commoner or low noble, is enormous. To traverse that dangerous space requires bravery and a quickness in defense and attack, characteristics for which Bugis-Makassarese are also famous.

High nobles, by contrast, are proud not to be identified with a locality. The place they strive for is so high that it is broad, unrestricted to a single locality. The lady who told me she is "like gado-gado, made of all kinds" was telling me that she is of very high status. She was saying that her ancestors were from all over South Sulawesi, which means that her ancestors' lower-status descendants—that is, her own followers-kinspeople—are all over South Sulawesi. The broadness of her family means that she could travel widely and be acknowledged everywhere as a "Puang" or "Arung," a lord. Her place is not restricted to a single village, or even to a single former kingdom: everywhere she goes, she encounters kapolo who defer to her, rather than ToLaing who challenge her. An extreme living example of the breadth of height in status is the young man who is the son of the Datu of Luwu. His maternal grandfather was the Datu of Bone, and his great-grandfather was the Datu of Goa. Luwu, Bone, and Goa—three of the most important of the pre-Independence polities in South Sulawesi—are all, effectively, his place. His social place is so high that it encompasses the entirety of South Sulawesi, which he traverses freely, acknowledged everywhere. To encounter a peer of similar stature (a ToLaing), he would have to leave South Sulawesi to confront other islands' rulers.

A less extreme example of the breadth of height in status would be the career of a high noble who was the center of a large kapolo, members of which would, of course, be widely dispersed throughout the akkarungeng. Such a high noble could imagine his (or her, but more likely his) life's career as the acquisition of increasingly glorious titles. They were marks or signs from the ruler recognizing the noble's extraordinary potency and, not incidentally, his many followers, which, in the epistemology of political knowledge in Luwu, made that potency visible.

A ruler who failed to give a title and arajang appointment (a title and the secondary regalia that located the area) to a high noble with many widely dispersed followers would be courting danger, for two reasons. First, a high noble who was consistently passed over when honors and titles were distributed by the ruler was likely to become disgruntled, the more so if,

having myriad followers and being clearly deserving, he was ignored. The noble would, in effect, be "severely disappointed" (Ind. *kacewa*) by the ruler. (Severe disappointment is the step before being ripakasiri'.) A ruler, or anyone else, flirted with disaster if he shamed a person whose status was close to his own and who had a vast number of followers. Further, the point of having a high noble of the center posted to an arajang-realm was to keep order—to prevent petty warring and to mobilize people to come to ceremonies of the center. As I have mentioned in many contexts already, Bugis-Makassarese do not usually take kindly to orders or requests issued from a person whose authority they do not accept with a "willing heart" (*macanning ati*). Their own acknowledged ToMatoa is by far their preferred leader. Thus a ToMatoa acknowledged by many people would be the most efficient appointment, as well as the most politically safe, that a ruler could make to a post.

And so it would happen that a high noble with many widely dispersed followers, who was capable and favored by the ruler, might well move his residence several times in the course of his life, from one local arajang to another (higher) one, finally ending up as a high minister in the polity's center. His physical movement in the course of his life was not a journey from a safe space into a dangerous space and back again, as is the journey of a low-noble trader leaving his village and eventually returning. Rather, it was movement from safe locality to safe locality; the noble was acknowledged as an Opu in each area, endangered in none, always the local political center. Physical movement did not make a journey.

The Empty Center

This way of understanding signs, movement, and the breadth of "place" helps us to understand, I believe, facts that at first seem paradoxical. On the one hand, the ruler was commonly imaged, in Southeast Asia, as the totally unmoving central apex of the world. On the other hand, court texts often recount the ruler's pleasure trips and royal processions around the realm. In fact, many court texts from island Southeast Asia are structured by the enumeration of names of places that the ruler visited.

From the preceding discussion it is evident that when the ruler was travelling around his realm, he may have been moving physically, but he was not changing his place or being dislodged from it. He was moving around *within* his place, which was as broad as the polity itself. The entire akkarungeng was the Datu's place and realm. Moving around within one's own place is not a journey: actually he was staying still, firmly ensconced in his place. In one's own House, where there are no ToLaing, one can relax.

The ruler exhibited the potency of the polity's center in his ability constantly to circumambulate his realm and go on pleasure trips, thereby showing that there were no ToLaing: no challenging peers, but only loyal inferiors. I discussed these matters with the Opu Pa'Bicara and his son during fieldwork, as I was beginning to understand something of the meaning of ToLaing, and they pointed out that it was very obvious to everyone that "higher" is automatically "safer." Lower nobles, commoners, and those of slave descent want to be "close" (macawe) to a high noble, to be in his or her bodyguard or live at the residence. One of the reasons for this centripetal urge is that the higher/more inner a person is, the fewer ToLaing, and therefore the less dangerous it is. In discussing how the ruler's world has no ToLaing, the Opu Pa'Bicara characterized the ruler with these words: *"Mette' tenri bali, makkeda tenri sumpala."* Translated, it means something like "he answers without being answered back, he speaks without being contradicted." To put it abstractly, the ruler was not involved in relations of reciprocity. Within his realm there was no Other to reciprocate. He could speak words (*ada*) but he could not *ewa ada* (converse, speak and be answered back).

To contrast the common human condition with that of the ruler, the Opu Pa'Bicara came up with this saying: *"De'natuo basi-é narekko de'namakki bali,"* which means, "Not even [a small and insignificant plant] sprouts if it hasn't an opposite." People strive to excel in order to demonstrate their superiority to their rival-peers: nothing happens without a challenge or a complement. There must be difference for events to happen at all.

The truth is that the ruler did have a *bali*, a reciprocating opposite, in the persons of the other rulers and entourages that constituted the polities that were peers in stature to his own. A ruler of whom it could be said truly with no qualifications that "mette' tenri bali, makkeda tenri sumpala" did not exist. Even if some ruler could have succeeded in unifying all of the polities of South Sulawesi under his own rule, there would have been some larger, different Other—a polity across the sea, for instance. For a ruler not to be answered, not to be contradicted, would mean that he was everything and everyone and everywhere, for there would be no one who was not a part of his extended body, the social body of supporting "trunks" infused and protected by his sumange'. The Other begins where the influence of one's own sumange' wanes, the point at which one can no longer influence or control another. The Other is simply the name for what is left over from oneself.

All this has led me to reflect on the meaning of the Other in the constitution of geopolitical space. When there is no Other, there is no shape. For

example, in everyday life, it is clear that people are most on guard, most concentrating, and most, as we say, "centered" when they are about to leave their houses and go into dangerous zones. When they return to their houses or, even better, to the house of a higher-status person who protects them and to whom they are "close," they can relax and allow themselves to become distracted. That luxury is permitted them because they know that they are safe. Similarly, the members of a kapolo are fused into a single entity, made into "one" (paseddi) when the kapolo's high core sponsors a ceremony. The kapolo is fused into a single siri' (maseddi' siri') precisely when the siri' of their leader, which is their own siri', is under duress. It is then that the kapolo's geometrical shape—its center-apex and the range of places surrounding it—is most crucially visible. The kapolo has more "shape," and more visibly orderly shape, on the occasions when ToLaing are there to observe and test it than at any other time. Finally, I would point out that the looseness at the center exhibited by the rulers of these hierarchical Southeast Asian polities on their many pleasure trips was made possible precisely because and when no ToLaing threatened. It is as though the ruler was exhibiting through physical movement the state of relaxed distraction in which one can luxuriate when one is in the safety of one's own House, the opposite pole of the concentrated state of conscious awareness called paringngerreng.

The extreme example of formlessness at the center, which to my mind clinches the thought that social geography is shaped under duress from the challenging Other, is the example of Batara Guru. Batara Guru was said to be the first ruler of Luwu. Although he is dead, people in Luwu insist that they feel the presence of Batara Guru everywhere, all around them, in everything. The world is "full," they say, with Batara Guru. I have the impression that Batara Guru's omnipresence is what makes meditation possible, since the purpose of meditation is to acquire potency. I was conversing about spiritual potency and other such matters several years ago with a Javanese *priyayi* (noble) and a Buginese high noble who were visiting America for several months, and we were discussing the American interest in Buddhism, meditation, and other Asian practices. Both these men had had the experience of finding that it was much harder to get their meditation to jadi (to "take" or to "jell") in America than in Indonesia. They attributed their difficulty to the fact that in America the surrounding world is "empty." Back in Java or in South Sulawesi, they said, they feel the world is "full." In South Sulawesi, "Batara Guru" is another name for the formless potency that is everywhere, the sumange' that infuses the visible world with life and effect and makes it "full."

Batara Guru cannot be located in a particular place. One old lady in Luwu, quite a high noble, was telling me over tea and the inevitable white cookies about how Batara Guru's presence could be felt everywhere. The context of her observations was a discussion of the importance of ancestors and ToMatoa. How much we look to our ToMatoa and our ancestors for protection and comfort, she said, and how disconcerting and discomfiting it is, when we are yearning to hear their voices giving us advice, to wake up one day and find that they have all already died. "We wake up one day and look around and where are they? They are already dead! WE are the ToMatoa!" she said, and people are looking to *us* for comfort and protection. That is why, she said, it is so comforting to visit our ancestors' graves, where we can feel their presence more strongly. But, she said, it is such a shame that Batara Guru has no grave! (She was speaking of Batara Guru as though he had died no more than a couple of generations ago, and as though the lack of a grave were a dreadful oversight that deprived his descendants.) I thought later about her regret, and why a grave for Batara Guru is impossible in the nature of things in Luwu. It would be culturally ungrammatical for Batara Guru to have a grave: it would mean that Batara Guru, or sumange', was confined by being locatable.

Batara Guru is the name for what is most formless and most potent, most invisible and unlocatable. Batara Guru is everywhere, and therefore nowhere: Batara Guru's place is so high that it is place-less, unlocated and unlocatable; he is perfectly one, but perfectly without form. Although it cannot truly be said of any ruler that "*mette' tenri bali, makkeda tenri sumpala*," the statement perfectly describes the condition of Batara Guru. There is no answering Other, for Batara Guru is everything: Batara Guru has no boundary. Batara Guru has no center because there is no edge. There is no empty space. The world is full.

Comparative Conclusion
The Political Geographies of Potency

> The central problem raised by this conception of Power, by contrast with the Western tradition of political theory, is not the exercise of Power but its accumulation.
> —Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture"

"Navel of the world" or "head of state"? These phrases can be regarded as mere figures of speech, mere cultural idioms whose apparent contrast conceals an underlying uniformity in human motivations and political processes. Or they can be regarded, as I have viewed them in this book, as significant points of entrance into vastly different worlds.

As it is conceptualized, pursued, and accumulated in Luwu and the other former Indic States of insular Southeast Asia, potency invents a world in which peripheral matter is oriented around a common central point. The importance of location and placement generally in these areas, as I suggested in Chapter Two, is due to the fact that sumange' or the equivalent accumulates in particular locations. Any location can become imbued with potency, but some areas are intrinsically more able to accumulate and hold it. In the Indic States, of course, potency lay at the center. Mythically, potency descended (in the form of a spirit/ruler and precious regalia) from the Upper World to the Middle World, the level where humans live.

The ruler and regalia's location became by definition the polity's center. These events gave political geography a shape at once centered and vertical. The characteristic movement of potency in these states was *downward*, *out*, and *from a single source*. It created a polity in which humans, who are by definition lower and more peripheral, look upward and inward to the fount of potency.

Thus my explication of "power" in Luwu has been organized spatially, as a kind of sacred political geography: I have moved from stable centers in Part I, to de-centering in Part II, to the structures that tend to hold centers together in Part III.

I turn now to some further observations concerning potency within insular Southeast Asia, beginning with Luwu and the Indic States and then moving to the ways that potency constructs the political geographies of other societies of the area, especially the one I have termed the "Centrist Archipelago." I make these comments in the interest of expanding an analysis of potency as a system of signs, of power viewed as a cultural system.

Potency is invisible: it is known by its signs. When the potent node is a person, the signs of potency include much wealth and a substantial number of followers. Thus people read the world as a system of signs signifying potency (see Comment on Part I, above). In C. S. Peirce's (1940: 98ff.) terms, "indexical signs" are those bearing an intrinsic connection to the things they signify. Thus heat is an indexical sign of fire, dark clouds an indexical sign of rain. The signs of potency in Luwu are indexical signs to their interpreters: body stance, level of name and title, number of followers, and so on, bear an intrinsic connection to the potency they signify. Because nearly everything was taken as or made into a sign of potency, the signs formerly had to be regulated, restricted, and controlled if the polity was to maintain its central and hierarchical shape.

"Restricted access to potency" could have been the motto of Indic States; it was fundamental to every aspect of their functioning. But since potency is invisible and is known by its signs, it was signs of potency, not potency itself, that could be regulated. The law system, as I described in Chapter Five, was devoted in no small part to this task; insofar as violence enforced the system of law/system of signs (and of course it did, although its use was considered in inverse proportion to the potency that wielded it), it was used by higher against lower in defense of restricted access. Names and titles, as I described in Chapter Eight, were used in such a way as to further disadvantage the disadvantaged and to promote the advantaged. Thus one can reasonably regard the polity, as I did in Chapter Five, as a vast apparatus whose purpose was regulating signs, and the ruler as the ultimate source, ceiling, and regulator of signs.

At base, potency is one, is centralized and unitary, in insular Southeast Asia's Indic States. But potency's unity, as conceptualized in this part of the world, implies duality, because being a center implies having a periphery. Its extended periphery is its audience; it requires a human audience both to signify it and to witness its presence. The audience of followers around a potent leader signifies the leader's potency to the yet wider audience of the world at large. These wider audiences, by orienting themselves around a potent node, bear witness to potency's presence.

The importance of audiences as signifiers of potency may be related to the importance of the performing arts throughout insular Southeast Asia. Dance, trance dance, public curing rites through spirit possession, shadow-puppet theater, public chanting of sacred texts—these are the characteristic and best known of the expressive forms of insular Southeast Asia. The po-

tency of the refined Javanese master-puppeteer (dalang) and of the sha-man-curer in an isolated hill tribe alike are judged in good measure by the sizes of the audiences their performances attract. These performances are spectacles, and can be seen; but, as Mead (1942) pointed out some time ago, the spectacles are moving ones whose visual figures are often obscured, and they invite the audience's kinesthetic participation at least as much or more than they draw on the audience's visual capacities. The kinesthetic participation of the audience in these spectacles (something of a misnomer, we now see) attests to the involvement, literally, of the audience in the performance: the audience is part of the show, and is expected to be affected by it. Moreover, sound—e.g., the gamelan musical accompaniment and the voices of the characters—not sight, is probably the dominant sensory mode. This observation is confirmed by the fact that in central Java the shadow-theater performances by great dalang are broadcast on the radio, and make perfect sense with no alteration, while if the same performances were videotaped without sound for television, say, they would be utterly incomprehensible. Potency is invisible; it cannot be seen. But it can be heard, and throughout insular Southeast Asia, sound seems to have a privileged connection to it.

By the same token, attracting an audience is a political act. This fact is behind Clifford Geertz's statement (1980: 13) that in nineteenth-century Bali, power served pomp, rather than (as in the more usual formulations of Occidental political theory) pomp serving power. Wealth, status, and influence all were used in the interest of holding ceremonies. Wealth, which in agriculture-based polities with an excess of land was predicated largely on having followers who worked the land, was accumulated by potent central leaders, and was expended mainly not on private consumption but on public ceremonies. Status was pursued as a good in itself, but high status was also the precondition for having influence and attracting followers (who in turn signified, made visible, a center's status). Influence over followers confirmed status (by signifying it) and brought wealth, for followers contributed significantly to their center-leader's wealth, particularly on the occasion of ceremonies, which tested the followers' status along with their leader's. The system was circular, as any cultural system is. Status attracted followers, who produced wealth, which was used to hold ceremonies, which confirmed and promoted status, which attracted followers, who produced wealth, which. . . . But the paradigmatic "political" events, as I have demonstrated at some length, were ceremonies ("pomp"). These were not the only such events, but they were the most spectacular and the most public ones. They were competitions between centers-leaders; they were demonstrations of potency, which is known by its signs (wealth, fol-

lowers); they were tests of potency, which attracts followers and wider audiences. Audiences are crucial to the demonstration of potency.

In the Indic States, potency was unitary, and its movement was from the center out. But since potency is invisible and generally impalpable, it cannot be perceived as doing anything. It cannot act on its own behalf. Thus it requires an agent who is embodied—visible, palpable, living, moving—to be its spokesperson. A center is helpless without its active sidekick, who is its agent and its connection with its audience. Thus the immobile, dead (hence potent, ancestral) regalia needed the moving, human ruler as its spokesperson and agent in the world. The nearly immobile, potent, but physically helpless ruler needed an Opu Pa'Bicara (a spokesperson) to convey the ruler's wishes. The Opu Pa'Bicara, in turn, was the high center within his own periphery formed by kapolo-followers, and needed his sulewatang (literally "exchanged body," substitute) to carry out his orders. And so on down the line.

ToLuwu express the relation of the two aspects of potency with a saying: "The keris is in the hands of the few, the axe is in the hands of the many." A keris is a sword of particular design, inherited and (formerly) carried only by nobles. It can be used in battle, but its virtue as a weapon lies in its animating spirit and the potency of the one who bears it. Unlike ordinary knives and swords, a keris has a sheath. The sheath shields its keris from the careless glance of the many, but it also protects the impotent many from the stinging moso of the keris. (Moso, mentioned in Chapter One, means "sting." Moso is the bite of a snake, the sharpness of a keris, the authority of a noble.) An axe, by contrast, is a crude tool used for practical matters like chopping wood and sago. Appropriately enough, keris were inherited and could not be bought and sold, whereas axes could be made or bought by anyone. Thus keris are non-circulating valuables, metaphorically immobile, like their possessors, whereas axes circulate through barter or money, and hence metaphorically move around, like their possessors. And keris, like their possessors and like impalpable potency, have little practical utility (a keris is useless for chopping wood), while the reverse is true for an axe. So the keris functions metonymically to exemplify noble potency, authority, and immobility, while the axe exemplifies brute force, the material basis of life, activity, practicality, utility, and movement. The contrast reveals the disjunction between what Occidentals call "prestige" or "dignity," and what we call "power": the former is empty and "merely symbolic" in our view, while "power" is active and practical, has a goal, and strives to achieve it. But dignity and "power" are not disjunctive in Luwu: they express the two necessary aspects of unitary potency.

The relations between the sexes, like other relations, can be mapped

onto the political geography of potency. A man is more potent than his wife: he is the center of the relation, the encompassing, the unmoving, the more dignified. His wife is his active agent, his spokesperson, his periphery: she attends to practical needs, cooks, looks after children, takes care of money. In both Java and South Sulawesi, women have control over the family finances, and non-noble women are often merchants. Because they are active and control money, from an Occidental point of view they seem powerful and well off, and indeed in many respects they are. But their very "power" and activity reveal their inferior potency, because activity and practicality bear an inverse relation to dignity. Thus, ToLuwu say, a man without a wife is incomplete. He needs a wife to be malebu (Ind. *bulat*), spherical, round, complete, perfect, because dignity *does* nothing, it only *is*. Without a wife, a man is helpless in practical and household matters.

The relation between a sister and brother reverses the mapping of the sexes onto the political geography of potency. In that relation, the sister is the more dignified, status-conserving aspect, emblematic of her brother's honor. The ideal sister for a high-status man is a chaste, unmarried one, who remains a symbol of their joint social place without compromising it with a husband. I mentioned in Chapter Eight that this was the position of Opu Senga, unmarried sister of the Opu Pa'Bicara, the caretaker of the family's heirlooms, herself an heirloom.

Indeed, when it comes to honor, wives (who are substitutes for sisters, as I explained in Chapter Eight) and sisters stand as the dignified aspect of a relation in which men are the defending periphery, both figuratively and (on ceremonial occasions) literally. Thus a woman needs a man, whether husband or brother, in order to be malebu. She is more like a keris than an axe when it comes to honor, and she is helpless to defend herself. She needs a *ToMasiri'*, a guardian of her siri', to accompany her when she leaves the house.

It is therefore impossible to elicit the statement from a Buginese or Makassarese man that women are inferior to men; on the contrary, they insist that they value them highly, as precious creatures to respect. (Other men's sisters at first glance appear to be another matter entirely, since the most effective way to humiliate another man is to make familiar overtures to his sister; but there, too, her value as a victim of excessive familiarity lies precisely with her high value as emblem of his honor.) In discussing the body and house in Chapter Two, I mentioned that women, as practical wives who do the cooking, occupy the area of the house that corresponds to the anal-genital area of the human body. The kitchen is in the back, is often lower than the rest of the house, and from it people descend the back steps in order to take out the garbage or go to the fields to defecate. All this

would argue the inferiority of women. Yet at the same time, the unmarried girls of high-noble families used to stay in the most elevated part of the house, the rekeang, the area where the family heirlooms and precious rice were stored—especially when "guests" came to ceremonies held in the front. These two spatial locations of women in the household express the problem they present to their associated men. Women (paradigmatically, sisters) are not inferior to men in Luwu, but they are weaker (more like keris than like axes), and at the same time are dignified precious emblems of honor. This combination makes women a tremendous hazard to their associated men. Like the genital and anal areas of the person, the house's "lower" and "back" area is out of sight and off-limits to other people, especially ToLaing, who literally cannot penetrate into the back area of the house. "Batas Tamu," "off-limits to guests," say hand-lettered signs between the front and back of some houses. (In a society that conceives of invulnerability as hardness and impenetrability, the fact that women are penetrated in the sexual act is probably not without significance. Women's association with the lower-back of the house expresses the precise locus of their vulnerability.) But like heads, women are the emblem of their men's honor; like heads, their place is "high"; like heads, they must not be closely approached; like heads, they can be penetrated by intrusive external elements. Like heads, they are a precious hazard.

How gender is mapped onto potency brings up another matter: the "effeminacy," to European eyes, of the high-status *halus* (refined, potent) men of the insular Indic States. The Javanese hero Arjuna, who appears in shadow theater, is slight of build, soft of voice, with downcast eyes and quiet demeanor. These are precisely the qualities valued in high-status ladies. Yet Arjuna confronts the *rakasasa* (monsters), who reveal themselves to be such by their huge ungainly shapes, their insolently staring, bulging eyes, hideous laughs, and growls and shouts—and Arjuna wins with a flick of the finger. This confrontation, of course, is not between empty dignity and active "power," but between the keris and the axe, between conscious potency and unconscious brute force. The point is not that the high potent noble man is effeminate, but that he and high-noble women are more like the keris than the axe. Gender is mapped onto potency, rather than the reverse.

The unity of potency, I have been suggesting, implies duality, because being a center implies having a periphery; being a keris implies having an axe to serve you. Significantly enough, in some parts of insular Southeast Asia and Polynesia, potency is conceptualized as intrinsically dual. Samoans, for instance, divide the chief function into two aspects of a potent whole, each embodied in a different person: the Sitting Chief (who ex-

presses dignity) and the Talking Chief (who orates and inspires) (see e.g., Shore 1976, 1982). In this respect it seems worth noting that the most important of the four ministers in Luwu was the Opu Pa'Bicara, the Lord Spokesperson; the parallel is exact. As Shore (1976) has shown, the logic of power between men and women shows the same dual structure in Samoa. Duality between the sexes and in nearly everything else, including potency, characterizes Eastern Indonesia. Many of these societies also formerly had two chiefs, one the inner dignified "Mother" Chief, the other the outer active "Father" Chief (both were usually men). The fact that these societies represented potency to themselves as dual, as split into two aspects of nearly (though not quite) equal prestige, itself indexes the fact that in these societies, potency was never fully captured by an entity that could claim symbolic hegemony, as happened in the insular Indic States. (Indeed, these societies institutionalized potency in ways that mitigated the chances or made impossible potency's hegemonic accumulation.) In Luwu and other insular Indic States, potency was more spread out, less compressed; and center and periphery formed an infinite range of gradations.

An analogous analysis could be made of the politics of accumulation of potency in other societies of insular Southeast Asia, for if potency is, as Anderson writes about Java, "that intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe . . . ," "manifested in every aspect of the natural world, in stones, trees, clouds, and fire, . . ." then the Indic States were not the only societies in insular Southeast Asia that shared a preoccupation with accumulating it. "This conception of the entire cosmos being suffused by a formless, constantly creative energy," Anderson continues, "provides the basic link between the 'animism' of the Javanese villages, and the high metaphysical pantheism of the urban centers" (Anderson 1972: 7). It also forms a basic link between the former Indic States and the villages on their extreme peripheries, and provides the basis for the politics of many of the so-called hill tribes of the area. Potency in these more level societies and part-societies, of course, necessarily shapes a different political geography.

Like ToLuwu, the people within these more level societies read each other and objects as signs of potency. It is obvious to them that no person or alliance of persons within these societies can claim hegemonic access to potency: no one, in these societies, has a monopoly or near-monopoly on followers and wealth. Of course, some people are able to acquire a little more wealth than others, and some can acquire larger audiences or more clients or allies (as orators, shamans, dispute-settlers, or expedition-leaders), and their prestige within the community increases concomitantly; but

these are temporary followers, not permanently attached to their leaders. From the outside, we can point out that the economies of these societies (which generally have very small surpluses) are not conducive to promoting large discrepancies in wealth, nor (in the most level societies) do people have access to the ideas that would justify a cross-generational transfer of status or prestige.[1] Thus their politics of accumulation and of restriction of potency are vastly different from those of the Indic States.

In hill tribes, the collection of potency tends to be open to everyone, and prestige is, as a consequence, "achieved." ("Everyone" includes women, in both Indic States and hill tribes. But, for reasons I have mentioned regarding Indic States and will mention regarding hill tribes, women tend to be less successful collectors of potency.) Individuals may become prominent over the course of their lifetimes, depending on their own luck and skills. But the discrepancy in wealth between richer and poorer in these societies is not enormous, and people in these societies have few institutionalized ways of transferring prestige or potency (like titles or white blood) from one generation to the next.[2]

The source of potency is also different in these more level societies. Since signs of large accumulations of potency are patently lacking within them, people in these smaller societies typically look outside to find and acquire it: to the forest, source of spirit familiars; to the coastal towns on the periphery of Indic States; to the invisible realm of spirits, accessible by trance. The movement of potency into such societies can be conceptualized as *lateral*, moving directionally *from the outside to the inside*, and *from multiple sources* rather than from a single coherent source.

The meaning of physical movement, by the same token, differs between the Indic States and hill tribes. In the Indic States, the theme of stasis figures prominently in the construction of political geography. I mentioned

[1] Wealth in insular Southeast Asian terms is a sign of potency, not a cause; but whether sign or cause, the two imply each other, in either a local Southeast Asian or a secular point of view. From this it does not follow that poor societies are necessarily egalitarian in ideology. Many Eastern Indonesian societies are predicated on an idea of hierarchical difference without having much economic stratification (see Traube 1986). Absence of wealth in insular Southeast Asia means the absence of a way of sustaining large numbers of followers or of holding massive ceremonies. Thus, from a secular historical perspective, it is no accident that the great Indic States of Southeast Asia arose in the fertile wet-rice-growing areas of Java and Bali, and at strategically placed points on the lucrative coasts, where trade could produce large surpluses.

[2] This contrastive characterization applies to Indic States and the simplest, most level of the hill tribes; but insular Southeast Asia includes numerous hill tribes that are somewhat stratified (such as the Toraja of South Sulawesi or the Ifugao of Luzon) and are very much a mixed bag of inherited and achieved status. (So are Indic States, for that matter; what is inherited tends to be the privilege to compete for an office or title rather than the office or title itself.) The function of potency accumulation and cross-generational transfer in these societies is too tangential to my main argument and too complex to explicate here.

in the Comment at the end of Part I that in the Indic States, the center stays still while the periphery moves: their differential movement constructs as well as expresses their relative social places. And in the Local Conclusion, I pointed out that when the ruler physically circumambulated the realm, he nonetheless metaphorically stayed still, for he was moving only within his social place, the realm itself.

The political geography that potency constructs for hill-tribe people is an outward-looking one, in contrast to the inward- and upward-looking politics of Indic States, and the meaning of literal and figurative movement there is consequently different. The prominence of the journey in insular Southeast Asia as a symbolic form and social experience strikes me as related to this configuration of potency. Unlike rulers of Indic States, who figuratively stay still, ordinary men who seek potency in many societies of insular Southeast Asia figuratively and literally travel far. They leave their local settlements and travel into the unknown, seeking wealth and often other things as well (amulets, spirit familiars, invulnerability magic); and then they return home. This looping journey has a special name in many insular Southeast Asian societies, but in Indonesian it is widely known by its Minangkabau name, *merantau*. We could similarly think of the trances of hill-tribe shamans as journeys away from their human settlements into the spirit world, where they collect potency and then return.[1]

Indeed, it is common in these hill tribes for men's feeling of superiority over women to be explained as due to men's ability to move. Let me preface this observation by pointing out that throughout most of insular Southeast Asia, certainly in the part I have termed the "Centrist Archipelago," potency is a sexually neutral energy, and brother and sister are considered the same type of being, aspects or descendants of the same *pu* or ancestral source. People in the Centrist Archipelago tend not to explain the difference between men and women as located directly in their respective anatomies or in the types of potency or energies they can tap, for they tap the same energy (sumange' in Luwu). But men do tend to acquire more potency and prestige than women, and it is striking that among at least several hill tribes they explain the difference between the sexes in terms of

[1] This looping movement in fact has a parallel in Indic States as well, although it is not part of the institutionalized accumulation of potency that we can call the "State." Great warriors, rulers, and mystics could leave the center and go meditate in the forest, the way Arjuna, a hero of the Javanese shadow-puppet theater, does in preparation for battle. Significantly, such practitioners of "high metaphysical pantheism," in Anderson's phrase, *meditated* in the forest rather than going into trance or searching for spirit familiars, so that their methods of acquiring potency outside the realm paralleled their techniques within it. Such journeys to forests or to the mountainous abodes of the gods beyond the institutionalized center of the Indic States are representations or acknowledgments that potency lies outside the ruler, ultimately uncontrollable by human efforts, and ultimately a cosmic rather than human energy.

movement. Among the Ilongot of Luzon, men are said to have "higher hearts"; they are braver and travel far distances, while women stay at home (M. Z. Rosaldo 1980). Among the Wana of Central Sulawesi, being a shaman is the highest position of prestige, and it is an achieved position. Some Wana women become shamans, but very few. Their disadvantage with respect to men in their quest for shamanic potency, which could be seen in terms of the division of labor, can also be indexed in terms of their movement. Men hunt, fish, tap damar, and collect other forest products, activities that take them alone into the forest, the abode of spirit familiars; men travel to the coast to trade and get wealth; men cut down the forest to make new fields. Women, encumbered by children, move more slowly and tend to stay closer to the settlement; when they travel to ceremonies, they go in groups; they work old fields rather than create new. Thus men's movement is characteristically quick, alone, and in realms that contain potency and wealth, while women's movement is characteristically slow, encumbered, in groups, and close to the impotent settlement (cf. Atkinson 1989 and forthcoming). But when Wana women do become shamans, as happens occasionally, they have not broken the rules but beaten the odds, in Atkinson's memorable phrase.

Men travel far to get potency; yet when they return to their settlements, they must become centers. They must attract audiences and followers to show their potency: shamans must have clients, wise old leaders must be brought cases to settle, warriors must collect allies for expeditions, orators must collect neighbors to harangue. Because the source of potency is always elsewhere (in the forest or the coast), not intrinsic to the bodies or beings of the men, the men are only spokespersons for a potency for which they are mere vehicles.[4] Not surprisingly, then, the sort of potency one sees in hill tribes is more active than dignified. The ultra-refined demeanor and quiescence characteristic of Indic States is notoriously (from the point of view of nobles in Indic States) lacking in hill tribes, whose people are characterized as direct, loud, straightforward, and crude by the denizens of Indic States.

Where does that leave the brother-sister and husband-wife pairs? Throughout insular Southeast Asia, including the Indic States, the hill tribes of the Centrist Archipelago, and societies of Eastern Indonesia, founding myths often include a brother and sister who travel together,

[4] Nearly the same thing could be said of high nobles in Indic States: there, too, potency is impersonal and non-human, and the person is a vehicle rather than a source. But potency in the form of "white blood" is intrinsic to the noble's body in Luwu, and it is augmented by the noble's conscious awareness. Thus potency, while impersonal, is firmly located in the individual person in a way it is not in more level societies that have little concept of the inheritability of potency.

perhaps commit incest, and who are ultimately separated. Yet brothers and sisters do not seem to carry the heavy symbolic load in hill tribes that they do in Indic States, for reasons that I suggested in Chapter Eight: when little potency can be accumulated or conveyed across generations, the relative importance of marrying "close" is correspondingly less. Siblings are soon replaced by wives, and in hill tribes, the husband-wife pair, it is my impression, is more nearly the icon of the male-female bond than is the brother-sister pair. Sisters and wives stand along with undistinguished men in these level societies as "everyman," the generalized other, the generalized audience, the backdrop against which potent men stand out.

The centeredness of these level settlements is similarly undifferentiated. To my knowledge, peoples of the Centrist Archipelago's hill tribes, like those of Indic States, live within ritual spaces. So, for instance, the Iban long house, analogous to a village, is a space made ritually safe; similarly, the Wana settlement is a ritual space in the sense that people within it can affect others within it by their actions. They urge each other to "unity," "following together," much as people do in Luwu. Similarly, the "unity" can be broken by incest and other transgressions, which can bring cosmic disasters, diseases, and the like on the people within the ritual spaces. In Luwu, ritual/social spaces are hierarchical, and the images ToLuwu use to express unity tend to be concentric: they see the egg as a symbol of perfection, for instance—a bounded space, concentrically differentiated; they say that the ceremonial food *onde-onde*, sticky-rice balls enclosing a palm-sugar center, represents unity and completeness; and lower nobles describe their relation with their ToMatoa as "an iris, a pupil," thus describing a centralized and hierarchical unity. But the ritual space of a very level hill tribe, it is my impression, tends not to be hierarchical or centered. If we imagine a hill tribe's ritual space as an egg, it would be composed of all white, without a yolk. Indeed, how could it have a yolk? The source of potency is outside it, not within it. No location within it has a special status.

General Conclusion
Empowered Signs

Potency is real for the people who have constructed their social worlds around it. It exists; it is neither good nor bad. It stands, in their lives, more like the law of gravity than like the Ten Commandments in Euro-American cosmology. A Euro-American who wants to survive and prosper treats gravity with respect. In a world that operates within the law of gravity, common sense, more than ethics, suggests that stepping off high buildings would be foolish. In the same way, in many parts of Southeast Asia, common sense suggests that it is foolhardy to treat an extremely potent place, human or otherwise, with disrespect. One can suffer ill fortune from courting danger as surely as one suffers from falling off a high building. Living in accordance with the analogue of the law of gravity is both wise and virtuous in such a society. It is foolish to incur ill fortune by being disrespectful to potent people and spirits, but it is also wrong, because it erodes the order of the world, and imperils human access to the potency that, when tapped, brings fertility, health, wealth, and peace. Moral value, then, is predicated on what people think is the structure of the real: people see an intrinsic connection between the way they take things to be and the way they imagine people should act.[1]

Thus, signs may be arbitrary from the perspective of the outsider, but to the people who live them, they do not seem so. *They* think the signs they use and live within reflect reality, that symbols and their referents bear an intrinsic relation to each other. What to Saussure would seem an arbitrary sign, to its users would seem motivated; what to Peirce would be a "symbol" (a sign with an arbitrary relation to its referent) to its users would be, in Peirce's terms, an "indexical sign" (one with an intrinsic relation to its

[1] This view of the relation between the real and the moral is basic to much of Clifford Geertz's writing. See especially his article "Religion as a Cultural System" (1973d) and the section of *Islam Observed* (1968) called "The Struggle for the Real." In these Geertzian-Weberian accounts, a conjunction between the real and the moral are seen as characteristic of worlds that are "enchanted," while disenchanted secular folk see a gap between the structure of the real and how they should conduct their lives. But actually, no culture is entirely secular or disenchanted in this sense: all humans seek to ground their moral lives on non-arbitrary grounds, in non-arbitrary metaphors. For a brave modern liberal effort to ground values in "reality," which also addresses the matter explicitly, see Ernest Gellner's *Thought and Change* (1965).

referent). As Bourdieu puts it, "When there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident" (Bourdieu 1977: 164). And this is how humans, by and large, would prefer it to be. Few humans seek doubt and skepticism with enthusiasm, or feel comfortable in a world where they are made conscious every moment that signifier and signified are permanently unglued.

But the realities that humans imagine and create are, within the constraints imposed by our embodiment and the physical laws of the universe, very disparate. Because the nineteenth-century heritage of social science tends to oppose and contrast material conditions and interpretations of them as "materialist" and "idealist" respectively, even though a number of approaches developed in this century (including the one I have been explicating and proposing here) are neither, it is important not to be misunderstood on this matter of constraints and arbitrariness. Culture, a collection or system of signs that is humanly produced and can be successfully lived out, is indeed constrained by the material world (our own human embodiment and perceptual apparatus, and the needs produced by our embodiment, and the physical environments in which humans live), and thus is not entirely arbitrary, not entirely free to "think itself," as Lévi-Strauss so dramatically phrased it. From one perspective, these constraints are enormous: they begin with the facts that we eat (as Marx put it) and that water runs downhill, and extend to all the elaborations of those truisms and truths. But those constraints, while enormous from one perspective, are negligible from another. The perspective that calls them negligible is this: that the constraints do not shape or determine a system of signs (to put it crudely: we cannot predict a culture from its environment, or a people's concept of the body from the fact that we are embodied beings); they merely constrain its outer limits. Thus we cannot "read" a culture from its physical environment, and the superstructure does not reflect perfectly, or even very well, the material conditions on which it rests. We can say, then, that by and large, the systems of signs that are constrained by physical conditions (gravity, the necessity of eating, etc.) nonetheless do not "reflect" them, and for most purposes of cultural analysis have a conventional, if not actually arbitrary, relation to them. More accurately, they have a dialectical relation, for each shapes the other.

Realities can be disparate from culture to culture because cultures are not what they imagine themselves to be, natural entities intrinsically connected to the structure of the cosmos, but rather are systems of signs, systems of representations whose relation to the structure of physical, natural reality is conventional and relatively arbitrary (again, within the constraints

imposed by physical nature and human embodiment). For the most part, systems of signs are arbitrary, for the simple reason that signs seldom point to relations that really are "indexical" (like the relation of heat to fire or clouds to rain), but to themselves, to cultural facts (e.g. white blood is potent), which have been made to seem real in particular times and places.

Thus the first project of a culture—any culture—is what Roland Barthes calls "mythologizing": to make the merely cultural appear natural, to make what is human and contingent appear to reflect the nature of reality. The first struggle of a system of signs is to promote itself as non-arbitrary, as real, as a reflection of the very structure of the cosmos, and therefore as able to define what is ultimately valuable. Mythologizing takes effort, and perhaps ultimately requires force. As the joke goes: "What is the difference between a language and a dialect?" Answer: "A language is a dialect—with an army and a navy." Any dialect of signs tries to assert that it is not only a language but Language, the voice of reality itself. Ultimately, the dialect of signs makes good its claim to be Language by using an army and a navy, or whatever along those lines it can muster. (In very unstratified societies it may be only the force of public opinion.)

The ultimate arbitrariness of signs, the fact that all "languages" are really dialects with big guns, should not lead us to either of two related false conclusions.

One false conclusion is that, since those signs are ultimately conventional and to that extent "untrue," the people pursuing the things they regard as most valuable cannot, at base, be serious: they must actually be pursuing what the historical and social-scientific imagination regards as real and valuable—wealth and power. I have tried to show, in the preceding pages, that it is far more enlightening to take what is locally regarded as real and valuable as the lynchpin of the political process, a stance that provides a way of construing privilege and competition that allows them to be reconciled with a study of meaning. Studying the polity of Luwu as though it were a huge device for accumulating potency and restricting access to it (rather than, say, as an oppressive structure to exploit the poor, or as an irrational frame in which to pursue advantage) in the end illuminates more about the meanings, the occasions, and therefore the substance of exploitation, wealth, status, advantage, goals, calculation, and the like, than would an analysis that bypasses local ideas as self-deception, bad faith, the masses' opiate, or irrational beliefs and values.

The second, related false conclusion is this: that although *their* systems of signs are arbitrary, our own are not. This is the stance that says, in effect: *they* are superstitious and possibly irrational, pursuing the acquisition of

large tubers, white blood, or whatever; *we* see clearly what the structure of the universe is, which allows us to speak with "objectivity" about theirs.

Some of the most talented de-mythologizers of the dominant systems of signs backed by force in Euro-America are, not surprisingly, semiotic Marxists (usually French). That is because the dominant system of signs and the forces that mythologize it and make it real in Euro-America are intimately entwined with capitalism, and semiotic Marxists, standing where they do, see clearly both the arbitrariness of the signs and the forces that make them socially real.

One such writer is Pierre Bourdieu, whose notions of "habitus," "symbolic capital," and "symbolic violence" take us a long way towards a reconciliation between materialist and cultural understandings of social processes, for he does not privilege the material over the meaningful or symbolic, or vice versa. One of his arguments is against what he calls "economism," a stance taken by many materialists and Marxists. He rebukes "economism" for dividing the world into rational calculating economies (those with a money economy) and irrational non-calculating economies (those preoccupied with, e.g., honor and ceremonies of redistribution), condemning them for "naively idyllic representations of pre-capitalist societies (or the 'cultural' sphere of capitalist societies)" (Bourdieu 1977: 177). So far, so good. Moreover, Bourdieu wants to insist that the participants in non-money societies are far from being "disinterested" (as he claims a naive and romantic "economism" would have it), that the elite of the honor and redistribution systems of "pre-capitalist formations" try to remain on top. Again, so far, so good. But his solution for closing the gap between "us" and "them," capitalists and pre-capitalists, in order to escape the "ethnocentrism" of "economism," is to extend economism's metaphor:

> The only way to escape from the ethnocentric naiveties of economism, without falling into populist exaltation of the generous naivety of earlier forms of society, is to carry out in full what economism does only partially, and to extend economic calculation to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation—which may be "fair words" or smiles, handshakes or shrugs, compliments or attention, challenges or insults, honour or honours, powers or pleasures, gossip or scientific information, distinction or distinctions, etc. (Bourdieu 1977: 178)

In short, to avoid suggesting that some people are irrational because they do not maximize, he insists that everyone is ultimately a rational maximizer; and rational, for Bourdieu, means "calculating," "calculating advantage." For him, people in "pre-capitalist" formations accumulate "symbolic

capital" and perform "symbolic violence," but these activities are as economically rational as the accumulation of economic capital, taking place as they do in societies where "the accumulation of symbolic capital [is] the only recognized, legitimate form of accumulation" (Bourdieu 1977: 180). His stance in these passages is actually the tautological Utilitarianism I outlined in the Introduction. Thus Bourdieu trades one ethnocentrism for another.

Closing the gap between the observer and the observed, the "us" of monetized economies and the "them" of pre- or non-money economies, by putting both into the same universe of discourse is an admirable project, and it is worth noting in Bourdieu's own work how far this tautological Utilitarian stance, which does not prejudge what is real or valuable, can take us. But seeing "them" as just like "us," calculators, is not the only way to close the gap between us. It is not the only way to "escape the ethnocentric naiveties of economism" while steering clear of romanticism and "populist exaltation" of non-money economies.

A different way to close the gap does not claim that "they," at base, are just like "us," but recognizes that *we* are much like *them*. We, like them, are socially formed; we, like them, live within systems of signs and dominant metaphors that are ultimately conventional; we, like them, live in social worlds that seem real to us because they have been made real by the powers that be; we, like them, can engage in conversation with people of vastly different worlds, but cannot view them "objectively," from stances outside what our respective cultures allow us to do; we, like them, continually interpret and translate what they say into terms we understand, which, like the terms (signs, metaphors, figures of speech) they use, are ultimately cultural products. This way of closing the gap does not promote the use of alien metaphors (such as the metaphor of calculation for all forms of thought, psychological and material investment, and modes of understanding and living in the world) to be imposed or projected onto alien thought processes and social processes, as though a metaphor produced by "us" had a privileged relation to the real.

At the same time, to recognize that the people who live within a system of signs take them to be non-arbitrary, and to ground one's analysis on that fact, is not the same as taking a believer's stance. It is very difficult to write a sociology of religion if one is a believer, and it would be very difficult to write an account of white blood and siri' if one were involved in acquiring and defending them. Or rather, one could, but the account would look less like this book and more like Buginese lontara'. As modes of knowledge, history and social science require a secular stance towards their objects of study. By "secular" I mean something like "disbelieving" or "disen-

chanted." Anthropology, in requiring its practitioners to participate-observe, has elevated to the state of "method" the Occidental human condition: it requires its practitioners to be believers and disbelievers simultaneously, or at least alternately. One must live with the tension intrinsic to the condition of seeing systems of signs as real for the people to whom they are real (and have been made real culturally, for one can kill or die for *siri'*, whether or not white blood is ultimately an arbitrary, nay illusory sign), while knowing that those signs are arbitrary for oneself—and one must know that one is, like them, the denizen of a system of signs that is also arbitrary, but has been made real in a particular time and place. The world is all that is the case; the system of signs is what is.

Because mythologizing takes effort, often including the use of force; and because mythologizing defines what is valuable as a by-product of what it defines as real, and institutionalizes it as something that humans can aspire to attain—because of these, mythologizing can be studied as a political process.

A quick survey of human societies reveals that what can be institutionalized as real and valuable varies wildly: value is certainly not limited by considerations of utility or palpability. Sacred rocks, Kula valuables, enemies' preserved heads, piebald cattle, crumbling ancient books in languages no one can understand, stocks and bonds, white blood, ancestral bones, overgrown tubers too big to carry—anything that one can think of, and many that one would not, can be institutionalized as valuable. Sometimes these valuables are reified as objects, in which case they may be circulated or stationary, each with different effects in the constitution of society's shape; sometimes what is most valuable is viewed as an impalpable substance, exhibited in a person's aptitudes and demeanor but unable to be stored or exchanged.

When acquired and used in socially approved ways, valuables bring prestige. Some societies make a point of not restricting access to the items or qualities that bring prestige. Those societies are relatively "level" (as opposed to "hierarchical"), partly because they may work hard at keeping everyone "the same." They may prohibit the acquisition of too much prestige by individuals through accusations of sorcery, or they may have social mechanisms and an ethos whose express purpose is to discourage anyone from standing out in prestige or in acquiring more valuables than everyone else. I have often referred to the Ilongot of Luzon as an exemplar of one such society, as explicated by M. Z. Rosaldo (1980); societies like this are adamant about being composed of "peers," people who are all "the same."

In other societies, competition may be fierce and overt and may allow a

social scale of differentiation in prestige. So, for instance, Big Men in New Guinea spend their lives acquiring and distributing valuables whose distribution makes them into "big" men. They hold in contempt the "rubbish men" who do not work hard enough or manage well enough to succeed at what their society values. But culturally specific mechanisms ensure that no Big Man can defeat his rivals permanently, and they limit the transfer of prestige to his heirs. Would-be heirs begin their political lives with the same resources as others of their own generation, and must strive on their own to make themselves "big." The continual collapsing of structures of differentiation in prestige due to the fact that they are personal networks rather than structures of offices makes these societies appear "egalitarian" when viewed from the outside. But in fact, as Bateson pointed out long ago (Bateson [1935] 1972a), their structure is asymmetrical but reciprocal. Their ethos and politicking are very different from those of the adamantly "level" societies of the sort sketched above.

Stratified and hierarchical societies have excited considerably more interest on the part of political analysts than have relatively level ones even though the latter need as much explaining as the former, probably because it is in the analysis of non-level societies that something emerges that is recognizable to the historical and social-scientific imagination as politics, exploitation, and domination. We call a society "stratified" or "hierarchical" when it restricts access to what it values most highly to a small proportion of its members, and when it supplies them with the means to convey the valuables (or the right of access to them) across generations. To study the politics of these societies, we must ask as usual: What does the society take to be real and valuable? How does it construct itself so as to *make* real what it takes to be real? What categories of people have access to what is valued? How is it conveyed across generations? Who controls the access? How is that control enforced?

An account of ambition and competition, of restriction and coercion, can be "cultural" in that goals and ambitions are taken on their own terms, rather than as though they stand as tokens or cover-ups for the acquisition of "real" wealth, status, and power. Values and valuables that to the analyst are worthless, or invisible, or immaterial (as many would put it, "symbolic" rather than "real"), inspire as much ambition, or more, than do the acquisition of wealth or the exercise of power. Access to those valuables may be controlled with as much force or more than is access to the items the analyst believes are worth having. What compels the highest and deepest emotions or the most sustained ambitions and vicious competition in one society may be regarded as the merest superstition in a second, or as perverse and disgusting in a third. Because something is useless or is coded as su-

perstition in one society does not mean that it cannot form the lynchpin of the real and the valued in another. Around it, social life may be organized, ambitions directed, and sensibilities formed.

Human sensibilities are no less local than the goals and contexts that shape them. The psychology (broadly defined) and political strategy of a Big Man seeking shells is different from that of a Buddhist monk in Burma seeking merit and from that of a stockbroker in New York seeking profit. The actors in a political process exhibit not a universal human nature but a local one, with local emotions and local ambitions. Humans and the goals they seek have an intrinsic connection for the simple reason that, like text and context, valuables and the sorts of human natures that seek them shape each other. Political activity, no less than art, requires and constructs the sensibilities that can comprehend it.

Epilogue

Wealth . . . status . . . power. What counts as wealth, the perquisites of status, the pleasures and responsibilities of power, are as locally construed as the most arcane and poetic religious text. And they are, as well, locally pursued: what prompts the sensibilities fostered in a particular society to find them desirable, how their attainment is interpreted and is evaluated by people at large, are as culturally invented and socially maintained as the items we label "myths." The forms of aggression and ambition are cultural artifacts, not raw emotions; they are prompted, are channelled, and retreat, on cultural cues. For how can a world's inhabitants act and react, except in the terms given them?

Culture is circular, but not unchanging. Probably the most radical changes in a system of signs are made when circumstances change in fundamental ways and humans, who inevitably interpret, are forced to make new sense of new circumstances.

Prior to World War II and Indonesian Independence, the structure of the akkarungeng was maintained in Luwu under Dutch rule. It was not like the nineteenth century, for under the Dutch, boundaries were drawn between the warring polities of South Sulawesi, slave-raiding and slave-trading were suppressed, and other changes were made. But rulers and high nobles maintained both authority and the legitimate force to uphold the restricted access to potent signs on which the vertical, centered polity rested.

Indonesian Independence removed legitimate force from the polities of South Sulawesi, transferring it to Jakarta. The akkarungeng and other such polities of South Sulawesi were dismantled, becoming districts in the new republic. Since General Suharto replaced General Sukarno as the president of Indonesia in the mid-1960s, the national agenda has shifted in ways that encourage the monetization of everyday life and make available new opportunities to make money. General Suharto has encouraged the exploitation of natural resources, especially oil and timber; in South Sulawesi, tourism, especially to Tana Toraja, has grown at an astronomical rate since the mid-1970s. This new wealth is used sometimes for consumption, but a good deal of it is used for rather traditional activities—bridewealth, funer-

als. People formerly of low status and relative poverty are now wealthy, and no ruler issues edicts on how many water buffaloes they can sacrifice at funerals. As a result, funeral displays in Tana Toraja have become yet more spectacular, and sometimes have the effect of impoverishing the newly wealthy, as nothing prevents, indeed everything encourages, their using all their wealth for ceremonies (cf. Volkman 1984, 1985; Crystal 1977). As James Boon (1979) has commented about Bali, "Reenchantment is taking place before disenchantment has made much headway."

Fundamentalist versions of Islam that seek to promote an Islamic state and, especially, that locate potency in the "clean souls" of religious believers, regardless of their inheritance of white blood, have made some progress in South Sulawesi. White blood and marrying white blood continue to be matters of great prestige. But since it is becoming far more unusual to have multiple wives, a wealthy and high-status man tends to choose a woman with the purest white blood available to him for his single wife. Monogamous marriages and sources of wealth outside a family following effectively shift social relations from hierarchy to stratified class relations: the different levels of white blood become isolated from each other both as families and in function.

South Sulawesians continue to strive to differentiate themselves from each other on the basis of prestige, but there is no coherent hierarchy of prestige, and no ceiling on the systems of signs. As the opportunities to gain vast quantities of money arise, and as ideas promoting the pursuit of money as distinct from or in opposition to social relations become more and more prominent (and they will be, since they are promoted as part of "development" and "modernization"), then the circularity of the relations between having status, having followers, having wealth, and holding ceremonies breaks down. The material and symbolic terms in which people are conscious and pursue their lives change. Social evolutionist nineteenth-century thinkers were wrong to imagine that the rest of the world is moving of its own accord, with its own internal dynamic, towards "us," towards the constructions that Europe mythologizes, makes real. But it is true that when a dialect comes on the scene with bigger guns than any other dialect has ever had before, it becomes the language of the day, and other dialects accommodate themselves to it.

Once I was speaking with the Opu Pa'Bicara about *kesaktian*, the Indonesian term for what I have been calling "potency." I was surprised when he asserted that it no longer exists in the world.

"The era of akkarungeng and datu is over," he said. "Now is the era of 'demokrasi' and the *rakyat* [the people, the many]. Kesaktian has disappeared from the world."

"But Opu," I objected, "there are still people with clean souls. There are still things that are makerre'. How can you say kesaktian has utterly disappeared?"

"If a pail of water is carried," he answered, "the water moves. If it is set down, the water continues to move, but only briefly. Its energy is used up. Gone. Vanished."