WHERE ON EARTH IS EASTERN INDONESIA? A REVIEW ESSAY

Lorraine V. Aragon. ***Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia.*** **Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. 383 pp.**

Andrea Katalin Molnar. ***Grandchildren of the Ga'e Ancestors: Social Organization and Cosmology among the Hoga Sara of Flores.*** **Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000. 306 pp.**

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Early in the breakup of Yugoslavia, a cartoon came out in *The New Yorker* depicting, as I recall, a sleepy nineteenth-century peasant atop a mule cart. The caption read "Meanwhile in Bosnia-Herzegovina . . ." This appeared at a moment when Bosnia still seemed remote and curiously immune to the passions and drama unfolding elsewhere in the Balkans. Subsequent events, of course, made the joke distinctly unfunny. I remember, at the time, remarking with some self-irony, "how like eastern Indonesia," a thought that events in Indonesia since 1998 might similarly embarrass in retrospect. In contrast to other parts of the archipelago, it is remarkable how much anthropological writing about, for instance, what early Dutch ethnographers called "The Great East" (centered in today's provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timur and Maluku) once portrayed the region as if little had happened since the initial Austronesian settlements. Yet, at one end of the historical spectrum, the archipelago's colonial history began in the Moluccas, Solor, and Kupang, places already touched by such wide-ranging players as Goa, Ternate, and Tidore. At the other end, the first killings after the fall of Suharto took place in Sumba[1] and, of course, parts of Maluku and Sulawesi have been among the most troubled in the entire nation (and let's not forget Sukarno's time on Flores, Pramoedya's on Buru, and the disaster of Timor). Now it would certainly be easy enough to use recent history as yet another occasion to castigate anthropologists for, say, ignoring colonialism and the nation-state, commerce, conversion, violence, or

[1] See David Mitchell, "Tragedy in Sumba," *Inside Indonesia* 58 (1999); Jacqueline A. C. Vel, "Tribal Battle in a Remote Island: Crisis and Violence in Sumba (Eastern Indonesia)," *Indonesia* 72 (2001): 141-158.

migration. But to rest there would be facile, and, I think, an invitation only to new, improved forms of obtuseness. For if the owl of Minerva takes wing at dusk, is that not because the latest or most dramatic news can blind us in its glare? It might be more productive to use these two recent ethnographies from the eastern islands to reflect on the problems of location, nation, and the objects of anthropology. We have here two works displaying very different perspectives on history, place, and knowledge. In quite different ways, neither accepts that their story should be told entirely within the narrative of the nation and each exemplifies distinct possibilities for understanding and imagining both "Indonesia" and its components.

Andrea Molnar's book, *Grandchildren of the Ga'e Ancestors: Social Organization and Cosmology among the Hoga Sara of Flores*, is based on dissertation research carried out from 1991-93 in central Flores, largely with people she calls the Hoga Sara, who live in a *desa* (village) of about one thousand inhabitants. It has been published as number 185 in the venerable monograph series of the Dutch Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology (KITLV) and is self-consciously a product of the Leiden tradition, as defined by the elder de Josselin de Jong and F. A. E. van Wouden and elaborated later by de Josselin de Jong the younger and James Fox.[2] True to the best of that tradition, it takes its responsibility towards the ethnographic record quite seriously. The monograph includes, for instance, a full list of both "standard" and "alternate" kin terms (which are so exacting as to provide, it would seem, distinct lexemes for both 3-greats and 4-greats grandchildren) as well as a separate sheet, too large to bind into the book itself, graphing the frequency of marriages among some one hundred clans and houses. It scrupulously records exceptions and complexities to even apparently safe, close-to-the ground claims that a less careful ethnographer might smooth over.[3] Nor are such exceptions and complexities merely academic matters. In reading this book, I was often reminded of my own conversations in Sumba, constantly subject to people's forceful insistence on the picky detail, the delicate exception, on getting the record straight—and the local fascination with minutiae and the authority that lies behind it that is so impossible to transmit to outsiders. One must admire the patience and scrupulousness on display here, of which the elders who were the author's primary interlocutors on Flores would surely approve. The reader is rarely asked to take the author's claims on faith—the raw materials are offered up for our own evaluation.

At least these are raw materials as understood within a certain scholarly tradition. As with any research, the motivating questions determine what does or does not become visible. This book addresses such classic topics as the nature of "house societies," diachrony and structure, precedence and hierarchy, and the diversity of normative principles within a small-scale society. The distinctive twist given by the Leiden tradition was the search for cosmological order underlying social organization. This order was commonly manifest in rituals, sacralia, and other special objects, and,

[2] Molnar's project is framed with reference to a larger comparative project, but the grounds of comparison seem to vary. Van Wouden's work, for instance, ranged across today's Nusa Tenggara Timur and Maluku, Fox's across all "Austronesian societies," (thus extending across the Pacific, although only with some difficulty to many parts of present-day Indonesia). Explicit comparisons in the present book are restricted almost entirely to Flores, making little reference even to well-documented neighboring islands.

[3] Yet there are curious omissions. Although diacritics are used in transcribing the language, there is no guide to the orthography, the maps carry little information and are not clearly keyed to one another, and, although the author can't be faulted for this, the photographs are almost impossible to make out.

following the lead of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss's *Primitive Classification*,[4] in the precise spatial arrangements of certain houses and villages. And here's the rub. Despite the insistence on local diversity and complexity, the search for cosmological order took as given that a certain kind of coherence existed and could be discovered and given a name. Researchers in the Leiden tradition tended to go about this task by asking those persons apparently responsible for speaking on behalf of society to describe that coherence. It is in light of this question that certain other questions remained unasked, even of this very material (leaving aside other local concerns the author might exclude as irrelevant to her immediate task, such as political economy, agricultural techniques, everyday activities, performance, exchange, material culture, the gendering of experience, historical memory, the habits and techniques of subordination and dominance, child rearing, healing, or dying).[5] For instance, how exactly does a "clan" agree or disagree with a verbal statement? When Molnar says her book "follows the order of emphasis of the Hoga Sara people themselves" (Molnar, p. 65), who exactly is talking and on what authority? What kind of talk is this? Under what circumstances, other than an ethnographic interview, do people make claims about "cultural affinity" among groups or state the "rules"? What's at stake in making statements of this kind and for whom—and against whom? With what other ways of talking (gossip, litigation, complaint, lament, song, anecdote, excuse-making, rumor, accusation, boasting) might they contrast? How does talk differ from the tacit knowledge that is so hard to put into words? How do explanations differ from polemics? From what point of view do the bits and pieces fit together to form a coherent totality? Does this kind of talk and the conceptual objects that it names make a difference in what people do, and if so, what? Does what actually takes place—in a marriage, in building a settlement, in settling a dispute—make any difference to that order? And, crucially, in view of the importance of materializations of this order in architecture, altars, and sacralia, how exactly *as objects* do they do what they do for people?

These questions aim to get a better understanding of that very sense of order that is in question, without assuming that it exists as a simple object in the world—say, a diagram of the cosmos, existing in disembodied concepts, apart from historical or environmental contingency and human goals, desires, activities, and conflicts. Just how, in practical terms, does this world inhabit the same world as its neighbors and the rest of us? Questions such as this might help us take "local knowledge" seriously, without setting it so radically apart that it must ultimately either vanish (the voice of nostalgia) or demand enforced segregation (the voice of separatism).

I am prompted to ask these questions by an interest in what we might learn in eastern Indonesia that doesn't simply repeat or subordinate itself to what we have learned elsewhere in the archipelago. For one thing, the Leiden School did pick up on something peculiar about the representation of order in places like Flores, Timor, Sumba, and Tanimbar that is not merely an artifact of their method, however much

[4] Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, trans. Rodney Needham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963 [1903]).

[5] The outstanding study of environmental and economic history in the region remains James Fox, *Harvest of the Palm: Ecological Change in Eastern Indonesia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), but it stands somewhat apart from his more cosmologically oriented work.

their method may have molded its appearance for us. Nor is this representation of order reducible to colonial disciplines or New Order cultural politics, at least not entirely.[6] Molnar is far from alone in finding, like so many earlier ethnographers of the region, representations like this, selected from a dense three-page analysis (pp. 79-81):

> [T]he categorically female eldest house stands on the left side of the village, while the categorically male first branch house stands on the right side. . . . [T]he houses of the trunk branch of the clan being elder and those of the tip branch being younger, they are positioned in accordance with the division into *mena* and *zale* (sunset/left and sunrise/right) halves of the village. . . . Therefore in the categorization of the functionary houses as elder and younger, the two axes appear to bisect each other and the *mena* side will encompass the *lau* [downslope, seawards] side, while the *zale* side will subsume the *zéle* [upslope] side.[7]

And bear in mind that this highly abstract diagramming takes actual material form in houses, plazas, and altars laid out—with some effort, one must assume—across rough, broken terrain.

But, whether the reader accepts the tradition of Durkheim and Mauss and expects to find diagrammatic order in so-called small-scale societies, or re-situates all forms of order within the postcolonial critique of hegemony and ethnographic representations of social order, the result is the same: we fail to be surprised. Yet shouldn't we be? Molnar reports that in building a house or fence, placing wood in the fire, or distributing food, a certain order must be followed. She then remarks in passing, "I first stumbled on these rules when I incorrectly peeled a mango, from tip to trunk; after being reprimanded, I was shown how to do it properly. . . . a couple of elders took great pains to explain that had my actions not been corrected my life span would have been shortened." (p. 160, n. 6). Yes, we may imagine these men (and men these elders surely are) taking delight in the opportunity to discipline the young, female scientist from a distant, rich, and powerful land, and yet still be left to wonder at what is involved in constructing a life inhabited by so pervasive a sense of ordering, sustained through such exacting self-awareness and underwritten with such a sense of the risks undergone even in the mere peeling of a mango.

A reader might ask: where does all this take place? Is this in Indonesia? The word "Indonesia" barely occurs in this ethnography, which hews closely to the traditional

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[6] To be sure, the appearance of order has often been the product of colonialism and the New Order, and with considerable reinforcement by ethnographic habits. But, as John Pemberton has shown with such sophistication in *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), even in those cases, it is far from being a simple matter of imposing something from the outside; and Flores bears the marks of a far different history than Java.

[7] The paradigm is Clark Cunningham's analysis from Timor, "Order in the Atoni house," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 120 (1964): 34-68. Compare this to Pierre Bourdieu's ambivalent critique of the cosmological house, reproduced in Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). My own attempt to make sense of the ubiquity of such analyses is "The Spoken House: Text, Act, and Object in an Eastern Indonesian Society," *American Ethnologist* 22 (1995): 102-24.

understanding of local knowledge.[8] But knowledge relative to what locality? Molnar valiantly refuses to take this for granted and begins her book with a careful effort to identify the society that is being studied. This is no easy task, in view of the almost rapturous exfoliation of linguistic and social micro-variation that characterizes eastern Indonesia. Must a society have a contiguous and bounded territory? Must there be a distinct dialect? Must land and language together define a group of people who identify themselves as such? The eastern islands confound all these conditions, whose artificiality anthropologists pointed out long ago.

The search for a society, in this case, starts with local denials: "We are not Bajawanese and we are not Nage." Why are the men who say this so insistent? Rather, they stress, "We are Hoga Sara." (The word *hoga* implies an insider's perspective on a group defined, it seems, by residence and land claims.) But the Hoga Sara are linked by marriage and ritual obligations to three other groups and much of this book is about this larger entity that has no name for itself. And today, of course, matters are compounded by the state's administrative units such as the village (*desa*), subdistrict (*kecamatan*), and regency (*kabupaten*), whose lines are often drawn with reference to colonial ethno-categories that, perhaps, no one outside a government office has ever accepted. At least not yet. And, of course, there is the nation-state. All these distinctions change their relevance in the face of "the lack of interest of the younger generation . . . in their local past as opposed to national history" (p. 14). But the problem is not just a matter of recent events. For, as Molnar's own evidence suggests, "identity" is not a thing in the world which the correct word will properly and finally label. Names, denials, and distinctions emerge when they matter and as the stakes differ, so too will the relevant distinctions. There is no reason to assume groupings and identities were more clear-cut sometime in the past. Local knowledge will not trump history—micro-ethnography will not lead us beyond the blinders of presentism—if we try to define locality independently of the contexts in which it comes to matter. As for today, we might speculate that even the oldest Hoga Sara may, in some circumstance, come to find himself or herself to be "Indonesian," or "a coffee grower" and "pork eater"—or even (like 93 percent of the regency) "Catholic."

And what would it mean to call oneself "Catholic"? It is part of Lorraine Aragon's project in *Fields of the Lord: Animism, Christian Minorities, and State Development in Indonesia* to explain just how the people she calls Tobaku are "Christians" and (less explicitly) "Indonesians," and with what consequences. The book is based on dissertation fieldwork from 1986 to 1989 in the highlands of Central Sulawesi with people who, a century after the first missionaries arrived, are mostly adherents of the Salvation Army. The long fieldwork shows to good effect: the portraits are three-dimensional and the evidence is drawn from across an admirably wide range, from changes in naming and marriage practices to planting techniques, healing styles, and new career options. The book offers a strongly historical perspective and is well

[8] For a call to undertake local ethnographies of people as Indonesians, and not just as "locals," see Tom Boellstorff, "Ethnolocality," *The Asian Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 3 (2002): 24-48. Danilyn Rutherford's account of Biak and Patricia Spyer's of Aru show especially well that the borderlands offer a crucial perspective on the project of "Indonesia" that is not reducible to being a "marginal" footnote to the national narrative. Danilyn Rutherford, *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Patricia Spyer, *The Memory of Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

informed about the missionaries as well as those they encountered. It is especially attentive to the delicate interplay of state and church, whose relations blend opportunism, symbiosis, and suspicion. As Aragon points out, the Indonesian state has used the churches to carry out the project of development in places that the state considers to be too marginal or too costly to attend to, with unintended consequences for both the particular shape taken by development and the message of the church. As a result, in some parts of Indonesia, the government effectively *is* the church. Meanwhile, in the Sulawesi highlands, a woman who is fully aware of the American president asks "And Father Suharto, is he president of . . . out there?" (Aragon, p. 306).

Like Molnar, Aragon must begin with an effort to name the society in question. These people are not Uma (a product of colonial ethnography that sorted out people on the basis of language varieties, dubbed by their word for "no"), not Pipikoro ("people of the river banks," favored by some American evangelicals), not Kulawi (a location in a bureaucratic grid), and not Toraja (a colonial category used to situate locals within more encompassing social frameworks in anticipation of future administrative and ecclesiastical territories, which today has a more restricted scope). She decides to call them by "their own name for themselves" (p. 46), locating them in place, as people of the Tobaku river. But once again, we might wonder if this is a stable category and a primary reference. It is evident, for instance, that some of these people live at a distance from the river in question and were in migratory and exchange relations that took them still farther afield, even in the pre-colonial era. And we might bear in mind how rarely we actually have occasion to speak our own names; it's *others* who are most likely to do so.[9] Where identity does emerge in the business of claims-making is in the contrast between highlanders, owners of the area, and "outsiders" (p. 48). Of particular salience for them is the contrast with lowland Muslims and immigrants, that they are "mountain people" and "owners of the area" or "original people" (Indonesian: *orang asli*). The story becomes complicated when we learn that the distinction between highland and lowland was sharpened under colonial rule and missionization. Prior to that, the two regions were enmeshed in exchange relations, migrations, and alliances.[10]

Location, location, location; to raise these questions is not mere terminological nit-picking. Whether it is researchers asking what exactly are the objects of their knowledge or Indonesians pondering their loyalties in a time of separatism, location is a fraught and far from settled matter. And so it is telling that Aragon opens her book not in Central Sulawesi, but in Jakarta. There, in November 1998, churches and Christian schools were burned and looted after a fight between Muslims and Christians (the former identified as "local," the latter as "Ambonese"—though, in view of the mobility of the Ambonese since the colonial era, we may wonder about these categories too). There was a swift reaction as Christians attacked Muslim targets in Kupang, over

[9] For the not uncommon problem of people who have *no* name for themselves, see Greg Urban, *Metaphysical Community: The Interplay of the Senses and the Intellect* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[10] In addition to Aragon's own discussion, see also Kenneth George, *Showing Signs of Violence: The Cultural Politics of a Twentieth-Century Headhunting Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) and Albert Schrauwers, *Colonial "Reformation" in the Highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1892-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

a thousand miles away. In yet other distant corners, as if obeying the dictates of a generalized reciprocity of vengeance, Muslims in Ujung Pandang and Poso responded with further attacks, and so on.

Obviously, the pervasiveness of mass media and fast communication are crucial to this story, as well as the background presence of the nation-state, by which events in Jakarta are relevant in Kupang in ways that they may not be in Kuala Lumpur or Manila. But the point I want to raise here is this: religions that make universalizing claims raise peculiar questions of locality. It would seem, at least, that Christians in Kupang were identifying with those in Jakarta. Nor is this necessarily only the solidarity of the beleaguered. For even when not under attack, they may also identify with Christians in Amsterdam or Seattle (source of an important Indonesian Pentecostal group), ancient Palestine, or Rome. An important part of Christianity's appeal across the missionized world has long been the promise of access, not just to transcendental authority and universal truths, but to distant sources of mundane power.[11] In fact, for many Christians in Sulawesi and Flores, whose missionaries came from places such as Britain, Finland, or Germany, colonialism did *not* necessarily bear a Dutch face (and may well be remembered with nostalgia [p. 141]) and the church may have offered a way to reach *beyond* the state.

Yet, as Aragon argues, religions do not exist as pure forms apart from their particular realizations. Therefore, in any given instance, they will, in some important sense, be local. One of Aragon's central claims is that the people with whom she worked practice a distinctively Tobaku form of Christianity, "an independent theological entity" (p. 46). Before turning to this, consider the more general paradox. Even if the current reifications of ethnic identity in places like Central Sulawesi derive from colonial ethnography and New Order cultural politics that, wittingly or not, reinforced metropolitan policies of divide-and-conquer (p. 160), they are being shored up by denominational distinctions. For example, in the provincial capital of Palu, some Chinese and Manadonese are Catholic, people of Pamona and Mori join the Central Sulawesi Christian Church so they won't have to worship in the Manado-dominated Donggala Protestant Gospel Church, Toraja and Batak migrants have denominations quite explicitly their own, recently arrived Javanese and Chinese belong to a Pentecostal church, and so forth (pp. 282-83). Yet, those Pentecostals took inspiration from Americans, the various Calvinist groups may be funded by Dutch donors, and the audience for Manadonese Christian pop cassettes seems limitless (see p. 183 and p. 269). In many cases, the church used Malay, a crucial part of becoming Indonesian.[12] When Jakarta's Christians suffer attacks, all of these groups may feel threatened. Moreover, surely there is some sense in which most Christians would insist that they share "the same" religion and that, however mistaken other sects may be, they are or ought *not* to be theologically independent. How, then, do we conceptualize location in a way that can make sense of both the hyper-local and the global identifications that churches encourage? Neither the paradigm of local knowledge nor that of globalization is sufficient to the task.

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[11] See, for instance, Danilyn Rutherford's book about Christians in Biak. Rutherford, *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners*.

[12] See my "Public Speaking: On Indonesian as the Language of the Nation," *Public Culture* 15 (2003): 503-530.

Although the book opens up these questions, its main task lies elsewhere. It wrestles with some of anthropology's more conceptually tricky and geographically pervasive problems. Aragon wants to give an account of Tobaku that does equal justice to them as "Tobaku" and as "Christians," even self-described "fanatical Christians" (*Kristen fanatik*) (p. 27). True to a long-standing anthropological tradition, she wants to defend the people she knows against outsiders' misrepresentations. On the one hand, against the perceptions of some metropolitan Christians and Muslims, she insists that Tobaku do not fall into the class of those who "don't yet have a religion" (*belum beragama*), and are, therefore, not savages or hillbillies. Their Christianity is not merely superficial, nominal, or even syncretic, if by that we mean a debased form of an otherwise pure religion. On the other hand, being Christian does not, therefore, mean they have ceased to be themselves. In an era of tourism, transmigration, cultural politics, and anthropology, Aragon must deny any assertion that they no longer have an "authentic culture."

But how to balance the two claims? To insist on their Christianity risks portraying them as having succumbed to an overwhelming outside force. What then does it mean to say that they remain distinctive, local, in some sense, fully themselves? This is, of course, a problem faced by many anthropologists (and only partly a product of anthropology's peculiar disciplinary worries—given the right circumstances, these questions also arise on the ground). Like many anthropologists, Aragon uses the language of appropriation and negotiation. The Tobaku, she argues, have transformed what was presented to them and made it of themselves and for themselves. In one respect, this is indisputable. Certainly, people appropriate whatever institutional resources may be available to them. Thus, for instance, the Batak church offers Sumatran highlanders and their diasporic kin useful organizational structures, along with access to political spoils and symbolic capital.[13]

Aragon persuasively describes the processes by which missionaries tended, perhaps even unwittingly, to favor those aspects of their message that worked best for their audience. Likewise, today, because local ministers depend financially on their congregations, they are constrained not to offend them by pushing too hard against the grain. As a result, she argues, Tobaku have transformed more than just the worldly forms of Christianity to fit their own cosmology. But what is a cosmology such that it retains some substance under such dramatic theological and practical transformations? What is left of the category "religion" once cosmology has been put to the side? There are two aspects to the story, as Aragon tells it. One depends on a distinction between "religion" and "culture," the other on the ideas of "translation" and "substitution."

One way to tell the story is that the religion has changed, but the culture remains the same. Thus, Aragon writes, the category of *adat* (customs) gives Tobaku "a recognized philosophical and behavioral domain in which to store important elements of pre-Christian cosmology" (p. 162). Now, she is *not* claiming that *adat* is a timeless realm of tradition. She is well aware of the Arabic origins of the word itself and of its scholarly and political reification over the course of the last century or so. But once reified, the concept is available for Tobaku themselves to use, all the more so if church

[13] See Rita Smith Kipp, *Dissociated Identities: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in an Indonesian Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

and state have defined it in such as way as to provide them with a conceptual bolt hole.

A bolt hole constructed of such categories, however, may lead its builders in unexpected directions. For one thing, the distinction between religion and culture is inseparable from the history of self-conscious secularism in the west. Yet, it also provided conceptual resources for the evangelist. The Dutch Calvinist missionary-ethnographer, A. C. Kruyt, who preceded the Salvation Army in Central Sulawesi, worked to separate the two domains (pp. 107, 158ff.). Like many missionaries since (as well as various offices of the contemporary Indonesian state), he sought to determine what, as "religion" and therefore as paganism, *could* safely be changed without disturbing the social framework and fundamental values of the converts. Some made the task easier for themselves. On the one hand, the first Salvation Army missionaries, Leonard and Maggie Woodward, simply thought the people had no religion at all (p. 127). On the other hand, it is a Tobaku officer of the Salvation Army who takes the old religion seriously enough to want to find it everywhere and extirpate all traces of paganism (p. 154). If we look at what has, in the end, been suppressed or interfered with, we get something like an earlier anthropology's definition of culture, a laundry list of "traits" or "usages" such as headhunting, human sacrifice, burials under houses, tooth-pulling (p. 59), polygyny, cousin marriage, bride-wealth, and certain naming practices (p. 66).

Perhaps, it is in this spirit that Aragon refers to the "culture of Protestantism" (p. 14) in her own effort to draw distinctions between, say, standards of sartorial modesty or practices of Christmas tree lighting, which look parochial and other, more universal, theological, or moral imperatives. Many Protestants, however, might not accept the distinction. The categories "religion" and "culture" are inseparable from the general compartmentalizing of life into "society," "economy," "family," and so forth (see p. 158). Anthropologists have long maintained that such categories were untrue to the holism purportedly exemplified by, say, pre-colonial Hoga Sara or Tobaku. Thus, to preserve elements of a culture within a category like *adat* or culture is still to participate in the de-totalization process. This much is well known. But more germane is a second point, that from this point of view, the more aggressive missionaries may have been right that culture cannot be separated from religion. And many religious believers do not accept the distinction in their own lives either. Many missionaries, in particular, and those who funded them, were compelled to reject the segregation of religion from the rest of life. To speak of their culture is to do violence to their own self-understanding and, perhaps, that of their converts as well, according to which to change religion is to change *everything*.

Yet, there is little value in a concept of culture that falls apart in the face of history. Nor should we demand of people heroic acts of self-invention before we accept that they are themselves. Given obvious transformations, Aragon turns to ideas of translation and substitution. These take several forms. One is functional replacement: Salvation Army ministers, for instance, took on the authority of ancestral founder spirits and, in some cases, replaced shamans. Christian ceremonies substituted for pre-Christian rituals. But what does it mean to say that something is the "same" under such replacements? These functional replacements seem to depend on another conceptual level, with language as its model. For example, "highlanders have

transposed and relabeled their pre-Christian deities to conform to missionary-supplied categories such as God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Satan" (p. 30). New labels replace older ones, but they continue to refer to the same thing. What they refer to must, therefore, exist in a domain separate from the words themselves. But what exactly remains constant?

Some missionaries have a clear enough answer: there really are spirit beings out there, it's just that pagans have misapprehended them and given them the wrong labels. Some are actually "Satan," others manifestations of "God." (There once was a scholarly industry aimed at unearthing indigenous words for "God.") I suppose this won't get us far in academic discussion today (although it might in the American White House), so if there are not actual beings to refer to, what is it that persists as ways of talking about them change? There seem to be several underlying models for translation at play here, which, because they are so widespread among students of culture and history, are worth looking at more closely. The most recurrent models are those that link word and conceptual representation, and public act and private interpretation.

The model of word and conceptual representation takes the stuff of culture to be underlying ideas. In this view, older ideas about spirits or values take on new names. The ideas attached to the words "Owner of the land" become transferred to "God," those of "ritual transgression" become "sin" (pp. 186-87). As a result, "[t]he reformulation of deity categories in the Lulawi highlands is less a change in deities' and ancestors' expected behavior than in their titles and individuality" (p. 174). But what are these categories, once they have undergone individualization? It seems that pre-Christian Tobaku spirits were not the object of much speculation or very clear conceptualization, apart from the requirements they imposed on human actions (p. 169). More than a change of labels is involved. Aragon's evidence suggests that once reconceptualized in Protestant terms, spirits become part of a world in which not only are there new objects (Jesus, Holy Communion), but the very presence of clear, knowable, spiritual objects is itself new.[14]

The second model is that of public act and private interpretation. Protestants are not supposed to seek practical results from prayer or feasts, but to treat them as symbolic expressions of thanks or respect. Many Tobaku go along with the Christian ceremonies but (here's another version of the linguistic model) attach different messages to it (p. 229), taking prayer to be efficacious and feasts to be sacrifices (p. 204). At this point, they become vulnerable to one of the very accusations against which Aragon is most concerned to defend them, that of the scornful Dutch missionary who speaks of "an underlying 'paganism' that threatens the churches' control over their followers" (p. 273).

Aragon certainly doesn't make the unsustainable claim that Tobaku haven't changed at all. Yet her thesis does stress an important degree of persistence across change, and what persists is not just the sociological category of being "Tobaku." What exactly is the thing that remains constant? If it is concepts, don't changes in their linguistic mediations alter them? If it is private interpretation, where does it take place? In domestic conversations? In the inner world of individual thoughts? If it is

[14] This may help explain the difficulty of undertaking more conventional philological investigations to find out, for instance, what spirits like *anitu* "really" were (p. 171).

normative demands, doesn't their social mediation change them? But, perhaps the quest for continuity of substances leads to the wrong questions. Let me draw out one hint buried in the book. Even in the Sulawesi highlands, local languages have long absorbed Arabic by way of lowland Muslims, including not only the term *adat* but also *baraka* ([spiritual] power), *seta* (wandering spirits, Arabic: *shaitan*), *ji'i* (certain harmful spirits, Arabic: *jinn*), and *Alatala* (the Christian God, Arabic: *Allah Ta'ala*) (pp. 172-74). As we know, similar linguistic flows took place across the archipelago. Was this the same sort of process as the translation into Protestantism? In some sense, surely not, since Islam was not actively promulgated in the highlands. Nor do we know much about how these words were taken up. But there are hints: here, as elsewhere, words taken from other languages increase ritual efficacy (p. 255), especially when those languages are identified with powerful outsiders. Without trying to specify the exact processes, we might at least draw this conclusion: to appropriate words from afar is not necessarily to use them as translations for terms in the indigenous language (although once they are available, they may eventually acquire objects of reference). They may, for instance, simply exert power without any assumption that the words are different from and linked to objects of reference.[15] That is, after all, one of the more common forms magic takes, even in our own world of commodity fetishism.

Aragon is at her best in depicting the everyday necessities, constraints, and compromises faced by missionaries and converts. For a project inspired by such otherworldly sources as evangelical Christianity, an important unintended consequence emerges out of these ordinary problems. The church helps endow the state project of development with an implicit capacity to make moral claims on people, and helps support the association of "modernization" with "the internal or spiritual improvement of individuals" (p. 276). If their collaboration endows development with immaterial values, the reverse is also the case: it reinforces the association between religion and material outcomes. One continuity in Tobaku life seems to be the expectation that the spirit world will produce material results (their Western co-religionists are themselves hardly indifferent to this expectation). This means, however, that the political success of the church hinges on economic and medical well-being, even simple safety, much as does the success of the state. Church, state, and nation each demand supra-local identifications. Yet their success cannot rest on ideology or sentiment alone, nor on the mobility of populations. And here we find ourselves back in some kind of a local world again, for, whatever its ultimate sources, material well-being is primarily experienced in very concrete terms, which are likely to inhabit quite particular locations.

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[15] See, for instance, Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).