

MYTHS AND SELF-IMAGE AMONG THE  
KAPUNDUK PEOPLE OF SUMBA

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There is indeed a before and an after, but  
their sole significance lies in reflecting  
each other.

Claude Lévi-Strauss,  
The Savage Mind

The stories I define as myths are those which a social group, such as a clan, lineage or regional unit, considers important and identifies as its own. In collecting and analyzing such stories from the district of Kapunduk on the island of Sumba in Indonesia,<sup>1</sup> I found them to be accounts which by the ordering and weighting of symbols make significant statements about the groups embracing the myths. Specifically, the Kapunduk myths reflect the current conception of role, status or character of the group, that is, the present self-image of that group. Because of this relationship between the myth and the identity of the story-telling group, the myth cannot be separated from the situation of the myth-holder, because otherwise it would be only a collection of stories susceptible to literary and possibly broad psychoanalytic approaches.

Kapunduk Society

The district of Kapunduk covers a broad promontory on the north coast of East Sumba, and its people share the same broad features of religious, social and economic organization as the other districts of the region. The population (approximately 7,000), primarily subsistence farmers, is organized into a number of patrilineal clans, termed *kabihu*, each of which assumes descent from a single founder (or group of founders) deified and referred to by the generic term, *Marapu* (to be translated here as Deity/Deities). These clans divide among themselves the secular and religious functions of the society. The people are sharply divided into three broad classes, royal (*maramba*), free clansmen (also called *kabihu*) and servants (*ata*). Class distinctions are hereditary, based on the status of both mother and father. Since there is differential access to women of high standing, many gradations of class occur. All classes may be found in one clan but only a few clans possess royal members. In East Sumba the bride-price is exceptionally high and the common explanation for a fall from a higher earlier status is failure to meet the required level of bride-price.

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In its narrow and more common usage, the name Kapunduk refers to the settlement near the Kapunduk River and its capital, Parai Bakul--Parai derives from *paraing*, meaning both a capital stronghold and a land or principedom. Outside the Kapunduk River area, there are four neighboring principedoms,<sup>2</sup> whose heads acknowledge the supremacy of the Parai Bakul ruler.<sup>3</sup> Each of these communities, or *paraing*, coincides with a religious unit, comprising the people who are linked to a royal founder Priest-Deity<sup>4</sup> and his temple. Each community acknowledges a particular set of customs which delineates its way of life and which were brought by the Priest-Deity, the ancestor of the Priestly Clan.

For the people of Kapunduk district, kinship and intermarriage among the royal families combined with a belief in a common spiritual origin link them with surrounding Sumba kingdoms. They believe that the various Priest-Deities formed a group of eight, originally organized in a heavenly Community (or House) of Eight Levels (*uma walu nonggulu*); upon arrival at Sumba's north coast the Priest-Deities tried, unsuccessfully, to reestablish that community there. Eventually they dispersed to the present worship-regions and established different rules of life. As a result, the strongest feeling of identity today is toward one's own capital-village and its way of life. The Community (or House) of Eight Levels remains an important concept while the number eight is regarded as the perfect number, indicating "that which fulfills." This concept forms the matrix of Sumba culture defining its separate identity; the term itself has become a synonym for their beliefs and rule of life.

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2. The names of the principedoms (according to their capitals) are as follows:

Wunga, Paraing Karoku (and its neighbor, Mbata Puhu), both of which are now remnant communities, lacking a local prince; Kalamba, Parai Natang (in the neighboring Kanatang district, a former kingdom, now subject as a whole to Kapunduk).

3. Although the ruler of Parai Bakul functions as the "king" of the district, this status within the traditional community is not recognized by the present Indonesian government. Administratively, Kapunduk is a subdivision, along with Kanatang and Kambera, of the district (*ketjamatan*) of Pandawai. The king has asked that Kapunduk be declared a district (*ketjamatan*), including the present territory and certain neighboring areas in West Sumba where the people also adhere to the Marapu religion. According to his aides, the king hopes to become head of the new district, although he has no formal schooling and knows only a few phrases of Indonesian. He presently holds the honorary title of Advisor to the Head of the Region of East Sumba but takes no active role in government programs.
4. I am capitalizing Deity to indicate that it is a specific kind of deity, that is, a Marapu. For similar reasons, that is, to indicate a specific functionary, I am capitalizing Priest, Negotiator and Spokesman. Throughout this paper, I am using the Kapunduk dialect, which differs from the standard Kambera dialect of East Sumbanese.

The settlement at Parai Bakul was formerly clustered on the spur of a high plateau, several kilometers upstream from the estuary of the Kapunduk River. This royal hill-top village, comprising twenty-six houses, consisted formally of sixteen (or, as the Sumbanese prefer to say, two times eight) clans, along with various subordinate groups. Each clan possessed one or more high-peaked houses (Marapu houses), of a type peculiar to Sumba, which served as a temple and the official residence of the clan. (In such a structure, the several families occupy the main raised platform of the house, while the high peak is reserved for clan deities and for the treasures sacred to them.) This hill-top village served primarily as the royal seat and as a ceremonial center; most of the clan members spent at least six months of the year in small huts tending their gardens located a considerable distance from the walled capital.

The sixteen clans are divided into four main clan groupings according to their functions. In a formal sense, the primary group is the Royal Priest clan (*kabihi ratu maramba*), named Watju Patunggulu; it possesses three houses. The ancestor Priest-Deity of this clan, Umbu (Lord) Hamala, instituted the rules and customs which make up the way of life of Kapunduk, and his clan descendants, the Priests, are the authorities on all ceremonial life. The main concern of the Priestly houses is to supervise arrangements for and conduct of the Priestly rituals. They guide the building of the house of the Royal Priest; this serves as the main temple in the village and officially makes a village a paraing. It also legitimizes the royal hierarchy which rules the surrounding land; moreover, the role and rank of the various clans in the capital are determined by their duties in the building of this house-temple. The clan sponsors the Priestly Festival, the Ratu Festivals, whose aim is to secure such diverse benefits, as plentiful children, bounteous harvests and livestock, personal cleverness and greatness of name. It participated in the regional Priestly conferences (no longer held) which resolved issues of custom and ritual. Priestly ritual at funerals assures safe passage to the other world.

The second functional cluster comprises the king and his immediate relatives. In the two rows of houses which face the central square of the hill-top village, the king's residence is in the center, facing the rising sun. He represents the fertile center, a seat of wealth and influence. His group consists of ten houses containing the following:

1. his own clan, the Ana Matjua, consisting of four houses for his nuclear family, his brothers and their families and servants, and one house for a warrior unit;
2. a satellite clan, the Ana Matjua-Tunggu Rimbang;
3. a servant clan, the Mbara Deta, in charge of the king's sword ritual;
4. an official bridetaker clan, the Tabundung, having two houses;
5. two royal clans, the Matolang and Lakoka, who are the king's friends and assistants, and occupy half of the king's own residence.

The third functional group is the warrior clan, the Amba Leling, who occupy three large houses directly across the square from the king's residence. Closely associated with the king, they were formerly responsible for rituals necessary for success in war and for leadership in fighting.

The fourth cluster, which forms the main body of the capital community, consists of the eight major clans; their leaders also comprise the class of free clansmen (*kabihu*). To distinguish them from the clans of other status, the eight clans will be referred to here as the member clans. In Kapunduk these eight member clans are divided into two sets of four. Each set possesses a title, phrased in ceremonial language, which describes it as the supporter and defender of the realm, but the first group usually handles the more important issues.

The member clans actually carry out the tasks organized by the Priest or the king, and thus they must be consulted and their support won in all major undertakings. Certain tasks relating to rituals such as royal marriage, the Ratu Festival,<sup>5</sup> building a temple or royal funerals are formally and permanently distributed among these clans. These clans also have functions in their own right. All these have a generally negative character, that is, propitiating, warding off or punishing harmful persons, effects or deities. These functions are envisaged as part of the essential nature of the Deities (Marapu) of these clans. They include: the Lord-of-the-Land (Marapu Mangu Tanangu), who can ward off harm to crops; the Deities who brought the knowledge about a ceremony (*langa paraing*) to propitiate the dead and about a ritual to cleanse the village from undesirable elements; the Lightning Deity (Marapu Kabala), who sends lightning to strike a wrongdoer; and the Deity whose function (called Raw Meat Cold Water, Tolu Mata Wai Maringu) it is to redress violations of marriage rules and, by extension, other infractions of custom.

Following the cessation of the major civil wars which occurred in the early twentieth century and after the expansion in exports of East Sumba horses, the ruling clan of Kapunduk, Ana Matjua, moved from the hill-top village to a mound in the river valley near its pasturelands. It built a temple-house for the Deity who protects livestock and established a small village called Rambangaru. Gradually in the period before 1965, the fifteen other clans deserted the hill-top capital and took up residence in tiny villages along the river valley near their gardens. But although they operate on a much reduced scale, the various clans still retain their organizational structure and carry out their functions, if sometimes only on a token basis. In the village of Maru, at the foot of the former capital, there are several Marapu houses where the treasures sacred to the deities from the capital are stored and where major ceremonies are held. The warrior clan and the king's warrior house, however, have become rudimentary groups who no longer possess Marapu temple-houses but rather occupy small huts at Maru--a reflection of the present formal disapproval of warfare.

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5. The Ratu Festival, held at the opening of the planting season, is directly under the supervision of the Ratu, but two important associated rites, one, the rain ritual, the other, plant fertility rites (li andu uhu andu wataru) are delegated to member clans.

In the Marapu religion, the chief deities are the heavenly beings who came to Sumba and founded the important clans. The Priests' and rulers' families consistently link their progenitors to beings of royal class who possessed greater supernatural powers than their companions, the later being only clan-level or servant class. Although, in a formal sense, the Royal Priest had authority prior to the king, in Kapunduk the Royal Priest lacks power and openly sanctions and supports the king as the supreme ruler. The king is, in fact, the center of social, economic, religious and artistic affairs. The leadership of the king's lineage is never questioned or criticized. He possesses great wealth far beyond any other member of the society, especially in gold and in livestock (horses and buffalo). This livestock is let out for care and breeding to favored leaders throughout the immediate area and the fertile plateau of neighboring kingdoms to the west.

The district of Kapunduk as a whole may be classified as a "minus" area agriculturally. The rainfall is irregular and insufficient to assure adequate and reliable harvests of corn and other coarse grain. The valley terrain suitable for cultivation is small, and travel, because of the many rocky hills, is awkward even on horse. Human fertility is also low; for people as well as food, the Kapunduk district is an importing area. One physical advantage that the Kapunduk River settlement possesses is that each year, just before the hunger season, there are repeated runs of small fish into the estuary of the Kapunduk River. People from surrounding districts gather up the abundant fish and carry them back in dried form to their home areas. Obviously surrounding districts and princedoms do not wish to be on poor terms with the ruler in Kapunduk.

The king controls the marriage system, which is governed by strict kin and class rules. Arranging marriage is the major pre-occupation of active leaders in the society, involving numerous conferences to settle the bride-price. These meetings are headed by *wunang* (heddles), specialists who act as go-betweens and who are able quickly to cast the positions of various parties into ceremonial language (*loluk*). The process represents possibilities for great benefits, since marriage links between groups become the roadways of social and economic life. The king's special concern is not only gain but the maintenance of the class system, the foundation of stability and order for the society. Because of the high bride-price, the king's power to give or withhold brides is a significant element in retaining the loyalty of other leaders and subjects.

In this setting, although the material culture is simple, almost impoverished, there are definite standards in regard to performance, whether in food preparation, manner of receiving guests, or style of speaking, singing and dancing. There is also a considerable body of artistic skills. The most complex visual art is the decorated type of skirts for royal women; the most famous textiles are the color-rich cloth wraps worn by the men.

The most developed artistic skills, however, concern the ceremonial language, *loluk*, a rich mosaic of images set in couplets of parallel meanings. Every village claims one or two spokesmen, *wunang*, who to a greater or lesser degree have mastered the style.

The wunang's skill is judged by his attractive voice and fast clear speech rhythms, by his error-free delivery, and above all by his ability to relate skillfully the aims of the communicating parties to precisely appropriate images. The ceremonial language is also utilized in the large repertory of ritual songs, for each major ritual has an appropriate set of traditional songs. In addition, the people are fond of melodic love-ballads, the texts of which are freely composed and delivered according to the taste of each generation. There is also a wide variety of verbal games and short stories. In these, the Sumbanese share the oral traditions widespread in Eastern Indonesia of short animal-stories which make a moralistic or amusing comment on human nature. The major artistic form of the oral tradition, and the one important for us here, however, is the myth, the story with broader social significance.

The myths of Kapunduk may be grouped into three major types<sup>6</sup> according to the place where they are told: myths told inside the clan temple-house; myths told on the porch of a temple-house; and myths told in the gardens. Myths told inside the clan temple-house ostensibly provide accounts of the coming of each clan Deity to his present location. Outsiders usually refer to such narrations as prayers (Indonesian: *persembahjang*), and the second type as tales with a supernatural element (Indonesian: *dongeng*). The third type may be likened to harvest-deity myths in Indonesia and are comparable to fairy stories or magical romances in the English tradition. Grouping by content alone, however, would be inadequate, for both the first and second type concern the arrival of deities in Kapunduk and a plot that in one area is part of a myth told on the porch may, in another locality, be elaborated into an all-night garden myth. Division by location also corresponds to certain differences in formal character and in style. The Sumbanese distinguish these types of myth from other folktales or animal-stories not by one class-term but by their attitude and practice in relation to the myths. In each of the types, not only is the story identified with a particular myth-holding group but the circumstances of telling it, which must include a prayer-sacrifice ceremony, are specifically defined.

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6. There is a fourth type, in the form of songs praising royalty (lodu kamahungu maramba). The formal place for rendering these songs is in the village square before the house of the king. The praise, in the form of laments, concerns the past communities led by the royal ancestors, or traces links by marriage to other royal houses. This type has more validity as a self-image of royalty than as history, although demonstrating this involves too much historical (drawn from written records) and mythic names and places to fit into this article. On islands nearby, such as Roti, Flores and Timor, there are accounts which offer more factually descriptive and chronologically significant material. In Roti, for example, James Fox has found that oral accounts of royal genealogies correspond to Dutch records dating back to the mid-seventeenth century. Mr. Fox's findings will be discussed in a forthcoming collection of articles published as a Memorial Volume for E. Evans-Pritchard. Unlike the Sumbanese, these island peoples had long and continuous relations with Europeans, notably the Portuguese on Timor and Flores and the Dutch on Roti.

### Priest-Deity Myths

The myths told inside the clan Deity house rank as the most sacred oral tradition. For each clan Deity only one version is considered correct and its presentation is hedged by many stringent rules and prohibitions. It may be uttered only by a high-ranking Spokesman, and should he err, it is believed that he faces "certain early death," a fate to be averted only by appropriate sacrifices. These official versions, recited consecutively in each major clan house, may be heard only during a series of prayer feasts celebrated before the planting season once a year or on a large scale once every four years. All the procedures for these ceremonies belong to the Priest-Deity (Marapu Ratu) and its functionary, the Royal Priest (Ratu Maramba). Because of this, I refer to the whole occasion as the Ratu, or Priestly, Festival.

The Ratu Festival consists of a series of feasts, *mangadjung*, each sponsored by a major clan house (or partner houses) of the community. Each feast consists of four official days, although in fact it may last a week. During this time, the host, following fixed specified procedures, issues invitations to other clan houses both near and far, oversees the preparation of food and conducts prayer ceremonies. He performs these prayer sacrifices at seven different locations, the general purpose being to invite all relevant deities. The climax of each feast is the eighth prayer ceremony, at which time the trek of the host's clan Deity (Marapu) is narrated. After several days of preparation in a festival atmosphere, the great day arrives. All the guests gather in and around the house, the man appointed as priest (*ratu*) for that house takes his place at the head of the ceremonial area inside the house and the official Spokesman, seated cross-legged on a raised bench beside the sacred pillar in the center of the house, calls for attention and silence and begins to chant the account, in the form of couplets, of the coming of the Marapu of that house. It is believed that he receives the message directly from the clan Deity, or Deities, who descend along the carvings of the sacred pillar next to the Spokesman's bench. In the major clan houses, the performance is exceptionally long, lasting one to two hours.

This chanted narration has little story content; it includes long lists of names of places visited during the trek to Kapunduk, and employs special expressions and figurative phrases to convey action, giving a cryptic, abstract effect. It is, in short, an esoteric narration suitable to a priestly performance.

The Priest-Deity myth in Kapunduk begins with the heavenly places from which the Priest-Deity, Lord Hamala, originated and from which he and his companions descended by stages to a point on this earth, Mecca. In the narration, Deities, travelling by boat, advance without incident through places whose names suggest the chain of Indonesian islands leading from Java to Sumba, and arrive on Sumba, not at nearby Cape Sasar, famed as the landing site for great Priest-Deities, but at Waidjelu on the southeast coast of Sumba, a distant area with which there is no present contact. From there they undertake the long journey to Kapunduk. Names along this trek are not the everyday names of villages and districts but are ceremonial locality names, often related to landscape features along or near the coastline. Brief incidents mark the journey, such as the Priest-Deity's giving names to certain

places near Kapunduk (thus providing a link with and a potential claim on that locality) or meetings with other Priest-Deities, namely, the great Marapu of two other districts in East Sumba, Rende and Lewa, with whom the Kapunduk kingdom presently has significant ties. More detail is given concerning four sites on the borders of Kapunduk, that is, Kalamba, Hambuang, Wanggakoli and Mboro Mbaku; all have some meaning today for the Kapunduk community, the first two as satellite villages, the later two hallowed as sites of ancient settlements linked with other early Priest-Deities. Once the Deities reach their present location in Kapunduk, there is a clear statement of the basis for each Marapu's presence in the capital community, usually in terms of one or more of the main functions for which his house is responsible.

The myth of the Priest-Deity states:

*Ka ku ngandi tau ndingiru, tau mandidungu  
Ka ku ngandi ana ngguku, ana manu*

I will bring the human figures both standing and sitting  
I will bring the figures of the chicken and the dove.

These images refer to the carvings on top of the Priest-Deity's temple-house and by implication to the particular style of religious services followed by that Priest. After this section, the content of the narration changes to a statement of the sacrifices and offerings to be made for certain locations, such as pasture-lands, and for persons important to the clan and of the benefits to be requested. The Spokesman is in fact transmitting the message received from the Deity to a lesser functionary, seated opposite him and called simply "the one who prays" (S: *ma hamajangu*; Ind: *jang sembahjang*). The latter thus knows the issues at hand, the sponsors, the nature and purpose of each sacrifice, and, after the Spokesman is finished, this functionary begins to pray. His prayer is a brief stereotyped statement concerning the sacrifices and requests, along with formulae to fend off harm and to obtain favorable oracle signs from the sacrifices.

If, on the other hand, the myth of the warrior house is being told, then the clan Deity is invited by the Priest-Deity to enter the community in the following terms:

*Ka ku ndjara moninggamu  
Ka ku manu wolunggamu*

This can be translated as: I will make you my charging horse, my crowing cock. Individual narrations may also mention the clan's traditional enemies or specify partners in marriage arrangements and religious ritual. Having heard the narrations many times, most people have the phrases deeply etched on their minds, but they will formally deny it. Not possessing the right to utter the text, they fear the penalty of "early death" which will befall those who violate or err in the procedures of the Ratu Festival.

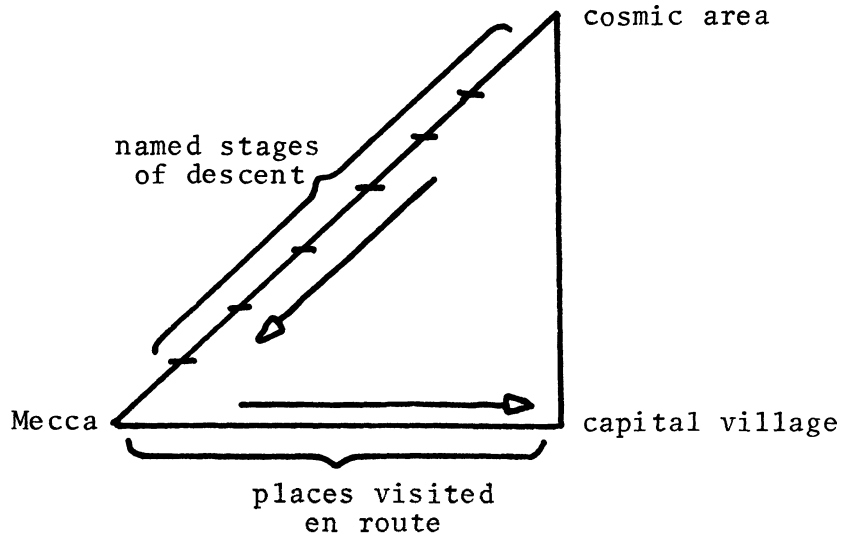
In order to understand the purpose and intent of this myth, one must examine the role of the Royal Priest with whom it is identified. The myth is a high point in a festival which in its entirety is considered a Priest-Deity occasion, and along with special songs and ritual procedures peculiar to the ceremonies, it is the formal possession of the Priest-Deity house. For example, the songs reserved for this occasion must be formally requested from the Royal Priest by the other major houses and after use are ritually returned to him. If

one views the community as a ship, bristling with warriors on deck and manned by rowers below, then the Priest is the Captain. The warriors and the rowers know their own tasks, but the Captain is responsible for the whole. He knows how to build such a ship, how to "read" the stars and winds for navigation, and, above all, he knows the path through the trackless waves and the names of the landmarks along the way. He knows the rights and duties of every member of the ship, and can justify or deny those rights because he knows how and what must be performed within the ship. He understands the ship in its entirety--its form, content, pathway and surroundings, in short, its universe--and he is at one with it. If he miscalculates the nature of this universe, an accident will occur.

The Sumbanese do not in fact call the Royal Priest "Captain" (as do the peoples of some neighboring island cultures) nor are they a sea-going people, but the ship still provides the most appropriate image within the context. The narration pictures the Royal Priest as the leader of the sea voyage from the heavens to Sumba, and in addition, three important divisions of the capital village--called the bow, the center, the stern--correspond to the terms for the sacred boat used in the voyage. Just outside the capital village, an altar (*pahomba*) marks the remains, "the shadow," of that ship, and represents all things outside the capital village, thus bringing them under the control of the Priest and his ritual. The temple-house of the Royal Priest is ritually likened to the ship in which the Priest-Deity and his companions reached Sumba; in the ceremony of opening the temple, men climb to its peak and call out the places sighted during the voyage from the heavens.

Translated to dry land, the harvest becomes the goal of the "ship community" and the "Captain" guides the planting cycle. For this, he "reads" the heavens and the winds and communicates with the invisible forces of the universe through prayers, sacrifices and oracles. Crop failures are attributed to errors in his ritual. The opening of the planting season, the occasion of the great Ratu Festival, is like the launching of his ship. He must give an exceptional performance and win the confidence of his crew, by presenting his detailed knowledge of the way, and an all encompassing view of the universe in which the ship travels and of everyone's rightful place in it.

His mastery of this qualifies him as the Captain/Priest. The Royal Priest presents an essentially static picture, showing the social entity like a ship in perfect equilibrium, its present condition. The narrative moves not through expressions of time, but of place, and it can be represented schematically as a right-angled triangle. The cosmic matrix (the heavenly communities, the sky with its heavenly bodies) is at the top, directly above the Kapunduk paraing, the ceremonial center. The Sumbanese express this relationship in the general phrase, "heavens that look down, land that looks up" [*awangu mangadu, tana matangara*], meaning "the world we live in." In the Ratu myth, the Deities start from the cosmic center, descend through several levels of heavenly villages until they land on earth precisely at Mecca, considered as the most distant point on earth from Sumba--its distance and sacredness standing in direct ratio to one another:



This myth does not deal with the mirror image of this journey to the capital, that is, the departure of the royal souls through the villages of the dead to the upper world. At the Ratu Festival, the myth deals only with the "life" or positive side of the Deities.

This Festival, "launching" the planting season, includes no account of how each group actually came into the area because such accidental events are considered irrelevant to its purpose. The Ratu wants to portray the nature of the present society and of its relationships as they exist in present belief. The picture is of a people with divine origins who compose a social order organized according to divine fiat and inherit a ritual of life determined by heavenly beings (the great Priest-Deities) and who fulfill their destiny only upon arrival at their present location in Kapunduk. The message denotes not the historic but the contemporary friends, enemies and functions of each unit of the society, although there are elements of the past in the picture. The positions in present society, the exercise of associated rights and the potential of future rights are, as in most societies, justified by recourse to the past. But here the recourse is to the ultimate past, the beginning of all things in the cosmos and of its primary object, Sumba. No appeal to the course of human history is intended. Thus it avoids the exigencies of history and shows that the present condition lies in the very nature of the divinely-ordered universe and therefore cannot be changed.

The sacred past mirrors the present and present knowledge and present concerns are reflected back into the past (past places) so that the past leads inevitably to the present situation. The conception is synchronic, it delineates an image fixed in the present. Thus the goal repeatedly expressed by the Priest-Deity and his companions during the trek is to reach the location and obtain the roles presently held by these Deities in Kapunduk.

In presenting the image of the world, the Priest must incorporate new elements of the awareness of the Ratu and Kapunduk society into

the traditional perfect form, that is, into the original trek in the Divine Past. A significant new contact may be acknowledged by adding place-names associated with it. Thus, it seems to me, close relations (not simply trade) between the Kapunduk royalty and Indonesian Arabs on Sumba during the past century made Kapunduk aware of the significance of Mecca. Accordingly, Mecca became the precise landing site of the Priest-Deity upon descending from the heavens. The name contains an element of history but it tells little about the character or extent of actual relations with the Arabs. Its use shows the highly selective character of the Ratu myth; from all the experience with Arab leaders on Sumba over a period of eighty years, the Sumba priest abstracted one element of lasting interest, the name of a distant place of great spiritual force, and placed it along the path of the Marapu to enhance the image of that great Priest-Deity. The traditional place of origin, phrased in other districts of East Sumba as "Malaaca, white country" (*Malaka tana bara*), became for the Kapunduk Ratu myths, "Mecca, big country" (*Maka tana bakul*).

Today, knowledgeable elders have updated their conception of this place of origin. "You see, from Mecca," the king's Negotiator said confidently, with his companions nodding in agreement, "that's Islam, Djakarta." Significant relations with the Arabs have already faded, but the mention of Mecca is highly favorable to the image of the Priest-Deity as a link with the great powers now situated in Djakarta.

Another example of integrating new experience within the favored framework is illustrated by the following story, told to me by a gifted Spokesman, about how royalty began. Seven girls were born at the golden spring, the bathing place for the princesses who returned to the heavens (to the top of the clouds, to the ring-of-the-year sign, the Pleiades). They descended from there to a place called the Spring of the Sparrows and Leaning Trees. Six of them had no children and returned to the heavens, but the last Rambu Kahu, before returning, gave birth to one boy and one girl. These built a Community of Eight Levels (the sign of a properly constituted community ruled by legitimate royalty), married each other and had four boys and four girls. A big conference was held at Mecca to arrange marriages for the daughters. They divided the girls, one each to Holland, Arabia, America, and China. The boys also married, one to Surabaya, one to the Murihu (Malaysia), one to Wuambai (reputedly Bombay) and one came to Sumba to marry a Sumba girl. The parents were children of a royal being from the heavens, so it was decided to let them be royalty. Thus royalty has existed up to the present.

Because of the mention of America, those present laughed, but the Spokesman responded, "Nevertheless, that's why you [the author] came here, drawn back by the Marapu." Using a well-known framework, the story of royal origins, he had already incorporated the new experience of an American into his personal image of the universe, and in such a way as to justify the present.

In narrating the Ratu myth, the Priest's primary purpose is the presentation of the group image (or his conception of the group image) unaffected by changes of time; therefore, one cannot analyze it in the terms of "history" in the western sense. In

Sumba and on neighboring islands, persons influenced by Western concepts in church or school try to compile migration histories by finding in the cryptic phrases and lists of distant places a story which relates their own particular and unique origins. The people in South Belu on the island of Timor thus claim to originate from Malacca, the Sikka people on the island of Flores from Ceylon and the inhabitants of Manggarai, Flores, from Minangkabau (West Sumatra). If this method were applied to the Ratu myths of East Sumba, one would have to conclude that the inhabitants of Kapunduk came from Mecca, those of the Melolo kingdom on the east coast arrived from Malacca, and the inhabitants of Tabundung in the interior appeared spontaneously on tops of Sumba mountains. Obviously, the social and physical similarities in these three local cultures in East Sumba negates any contention of divergent origins.

What may have a historical character (in our sense of the word) are the informal recollections, which date back to the grandfather generation of the narrator. These fall within the experience of living persons, but usually the remembered portions are limited to particular aspects relevant to continuing or current concerns. For example, I asked about relations during the past two generations between Kapunduk and Parai Natang, a principedom on the southern border. One of the leading Kapunduk princes was able to list without preparation the full names of the several warrior leaders of the grandfather generation who were involved in the last notable battle between Parai Natang and Kapunduk, and their present descendants, since this kind of information was needed in a peacemaking ritual he had witnessed some ten years ago. He could also recount the main dramatic personal encounters between the opposing warriors, but on the course of relations between the two communities he could say nothing.

Genealogical data also show the short-term nature of past recollections. In a hereditary class society, one might expect careful preservation of genealogies, but in Kapunduk only the king's ancestors, a list of eight or ten human generations, are preserved but kept a carefully guarded official secret. Of the remaining hundreds of persons, of all classes, that were interviewed, only one could provide information beyond his grandfather, and he was a Spokesman who had engaged in much negotiation relating to his grandfather who was linked by membership to three clans. None of the Spokesman's three grown sons, however, could give names beyond their grandmother who was still living.

Formerly the Royal Priest had an opportunity to adjust and update his conception of the universe, that is, on the occasion of the great conferences when Priests from many districts gathered at Mboro Mbaku, near Cape Sasar. In conference with visiting royalty, they decided upon striking new gold objects representing the class, character and greatness of the various clan Deities. This meeting also provided an occasion for changes in the standard Priest-Deity myth, accepted by consensus among the various regional Priests, and known as *hili pingu hili orai*, "to renew our knowledge."

#### Clan Elder Myths

The second type of myth, those told on the porches of the village temple-house, may also be termed Ama Bokulu myths. Ama Bokulu

literally means "Big Father," translated here as "Elder," and refers to the head of a clan household, a position which requires considerable knowledge of tradition and customary rules. The Ama Bokulu include the Spokesmen. Elders are the qualified narrators of the myths concerning the lives and exploits of the various clan Deities.<sup>7</sup> The myths are recited on two occasions when the Ama Bokulu gather: in the course of a major festival, when there is an exceptionally long wait on the porches while the food is being prepared; or in the slack season, when the men frequently gather for minor prayer ceremonies, sitting for hours on or near the host's shady porch stringing their ropes or fish nets. The apparently casual scene is actually defined by its story-teller, place, occasion and audience; narration under other circumstances would be resisted.

Kapunduk people call this type of myth, *pangerangu Marapu*, metaphorical stories concerning Deities. Because these myths have more story content, they are more interesting than the official Ratu myth. Nevertheless, the narratives often include elements from the other types of myths, such as trek accounts similar to the Ratu myth and repetitive patterns of events and situations obviously influenced by the myths told in the gardens. But the story element provides the characteristic and certainly the most enjoyable part of the Elder myths. It usually includes the Divine Trickster and is often enlivened by a humorous "sex angle," cast in a lively narrative prose and delivered in a robust dramatic manner. In the Elder myths, the Deities possess a certain bold brawniness, perhaps resulting from competitive feelings among the Elders who each represent a different Marapu.

The Elders may tell more than one story about a single clan Deity, each story emphasizing a particular thing brought by that Deity, such as knowledge of a certain ritual or special powers and privileges--for example, the right to take brides from a certain clan or the right to own certain fields. The myths often conclude with a brief statement, "and so clan So and So performs this ritual or takes brides from clan X to this day." Considering the range of incident, the conclusions often seem lame or anticlimatic, but the burden of the myth is to fix the present role, character and privileges of the clan by anchoring it irrevocably in the nature of its founding Deity. In both the Ratu and the Elder myths, though incidents differ, the basic character or role attributed to a given clan corresponds. However, the Elder's story about the arrival of an individual Deity usually varies from the official Ratu myth, in which most of the clan founders appear as the companions of the Priest-Deity on his journey.

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7. Inhabitants of Kapunduk closely identify the Elder with his Marapu, "Here comes Umbu Hodu now," said an Elder as the head of clan Makambiru approached, referring to him by the name of his Ancestor Marapu. When speaking formally, however, the Elders refer to the head of a clan as Mangu Marapungu, Owner of the Marapu.

Although Elders know the essential features of their own clan myths, few have a talent for story-telling so that the task of knowing these tales in all their vivid, full-length detail devolves on the major Spokesmen (wunangu bakul).

These differences in stories of the "past" have disturbed outside observers of the culture, from the early Dutch officials to present-day local students, who have collected clan myths in order to formulate a history of the people. The contradictions do not mean that the stories are essentially "false" or that Sumba story-tellers are short on logic. The stories, as shown by their context within the society, seek to make different points. The Royal Priest myth recited at the great Ratu Festival is intended to convey an image of the community as an ordered unit with the roles and interrelationships of its clan members following a divine founder's single leadership. The story offered by the head of each clan presents an individual image in which his own founder Deity is the main actor, behaving in a way that displays the Deity's nature as the possessor of certain powers and rights. Both stories take place in the sacred past when the divinities were the prime movers, a convention which shows that the situation and claims presented accord with the unalterable nature of the universe.

One of the widely-known and best-linked Elder myths in Kapunduk belongs to the member clan Makata Pandji, and concerns relations between its Deity, Umbu Hura Karepu and the Priest-Deity, Umbu Hamala. In the prior discussion of the Priest-Deity, he appeared as a great royal leader who brought divine knowledge of ritual, according to which he organized the Kapunduk community. He provided the great legitimizing source for the king's power and position, and as a mark of his greatness, he was repeatedly linked with the two key original Priestly centers, Wanggakoli in the south and Mboro Mbaku in the north. He came to the Kapunduk area in search of his elder brother, Umbu Ndataia, the Priest-Deity who had already founded Wanggakoli, a now legendary capital near present-day Parai Natang on the southern border of Kapunduk. In Parai Natang, Umbu Ndataia is still honored as Priest-Deity, his clan house is a large, high-peaked structure in the center of the village and the leader of his clan, the Ratu Maramba, possesses a role consistent with that of his ancestor in the Ratu myth; he is the official leader, the royal ruler of the community. Here, then, the term Ratu Maramba is being used in the sense "Priest is Ruler." Umbu Ndataia's position as elder brother suggests that he represents an older, more respected kind of Priest-Deity.

Umbu Hamala is also linked with Mboro Mbaku, another village of the sacred past located near Cape Sasar, the landing site of the first great Priest-Deities, who founded Mboro Mbaku. There Umbu Hamala took part in a legendary conference during which land was apportioned to the Deities of the various districts of Sumba. Priests from many districts periodically met at the same site to resolve major issues; a link with Mboro Mbaku is thus an assurance of deep-seated legitimacy.

Considering the fundamental importance of Umbu Hamala and given the similar Priest-Deity traditions accompanied by high status for the Ratu Maramba in other districts of East Sumba, the actual circumstances of the Priest-Deity clan in Kapunduk seem surprising. The clan, Watju Patunggulu, consists of little more than the nuclear family of the Royal Priest; all its members, including the Royal Priest himself, are considered servant class (*ata*). He lives, not in a large temple-house, but in a hut some distance away from the ceremonial center of Maru. Even at Maru, the all-important Priest-Deity of Kapunduk has no house-temple of his own but is lodged in another Deity's house (actually on its porch). At meetings, the Royal

Priest exercises no authority, formal or personal, his own personality being weak and fretful. Although Umbu Hamala is considered to have fathered Umbu Majewang, the Ancestor Deity of the king's own clan, an Elder could whisper to me at the approach of the Royal Priest (Ratu Maramba), "That's the king's priest (*ratu Tamu Umbu*)," using the king's secular title. Obviously the title "Ratu Maramba" could better be translated in Kapunduk in the possessive sense of "Royal Ruler's Priest."

My arrival in Kapunduk coincided with the great fish-runs which occur just as the first "dry-run" thunder announces the approach of the rainy season. I found that people using the term "Priest" or "Priestly house" meant the clan of Makata Pandji, which indeed officially possesses the fish-run ceremonies, symbolized by a "fish enclosure" in its temple-house. This enclosure is also used in the rites for rain which are another function of this clan. In fact, as I was repeatedly told, all important meetings and ceremonies were held at that clan house. The prominence of Makata Pandji and the corresponding lack of leadership by the Royal Priest were remarkable.

At the time of the fish-runs, I was urged to ask the Elders to explain why the fish rise in the estuary of the Kapunduk River and in no other. In an atmosphere of great relish and enjoyment on the part of the attending Elders, the king's Negotiator told the following brief version of the story which is the clan myth of Makata Randji.

The narrative begins with Umbu Hamala. He ignored his wife at Wanggakoli, and hearing of a foreign princess of great beauty, Rambu (Lady) Matamar, he went abroad to search for her. Arriving overseas, he found her, but another suitor, Pon Palak, was already claiming her attention. The two rivals argued over possession of the girl, who liked both men. They reached an agreement to share her and decided that to avoid meeting when claiming the lady's favors, each would signal his approach by noisy footsteps on the creaking porch, while the other, if already in the Rambu's room, would clear his throat. Thus, when Umbu Hamala arrived at Rambu Matamar's house, Pon Palak, who was already in the house, cleared his throat. But on a later occasion, when Pon Palak approached, Umbu Hamala failed to clear his throat. Pon Palak entered the room, and both men, overcome with shame, drew their swords and killed each other. Their bodies were put into two coffins draped with cloths of different color.

Because of Umbu Hamala's long absence, Umbu Hura Karepu (Ancestor Deity of clan Makata Pandji) went out in search of his great elder. Arriving at Rambu Matamar's house, he had to choose which was the coffin of Umbu Hamala. After selecting the right coffin, he demanded that Rambu Matamar, as the cause of Umbu Hamala's death, return with him to Sumba. Her father agreed and as a special bridegift (the usual gift is textiles) gave her the fish which now rise in the Kapunduk estuary, "so that she would have something to eat with her rice." Upon arrival, she strewed the fish in the estuary and her discarded container rumbling with the tides creates the thunder which signals the rise of the fish.

Their landing site is marked near the estuary by two stones called "bow and stern." These altars, together with other sites

at the estuary where Hura Karepu reportedly buried the shoes and hat of Umbu Hamala, are the scene of special ceremonies to assure good fish-runs and rainfall. The head of the house may not eat pork or dog-meat (two basic feast-sacrifice animals) because Rambu Matamar came from either Ende or Surabaja, which for the Sumbanese represent Islamic centers. A recurring name for the head of the clan is "Kawau" which means "Endenese Islamic person."

In this story, and more noticeably in the full-length version, the greatest attention is given to the circumstances of Umbu Hamala's downfall and the special powers of Hura Karepu in finding Umbu Hamala and obtaining his remains. The acquisition of the fish is a brief incident tacked on to the end. What is especially striking is the general feeling that the ancestress, like the fish, should come from overseas. Possibly some North Sumba clans have Endenese ancestry, for early Dutch accounts indicate marriages between north coast leaders and Endenese princesses. But the foreign element should not be construed as evidence of belief that the fish-run ritual originated with the Endenese. Rather it indicates that possession of a special fish-run and fish ritual of that scale is unique; it is not part of traditional Ratu religious services. The Endenese form a metaphorical parallel with the fish. For generations, the Endenese, like the fish, seasonally arrived in droves from the sea. They brought necessities and luxury goods to trade with Sumba villages. They represented not only incoming wealth but also mercenaries used to control subjects. Viewed in its entirety, the myth reflects the contemporary situation--Umbu Hura Karepu presides over the fish ritual (linked with rain ritual), supplanting the Priest-Deity, Umbu Hamala, represented at the fish-runs only in formal terms, signified by his hat and shoes buried at the estuary.

But what accounts for the apparent disparity between the Priest-Deity's own high status and the pathetic position of his clan? Also, if Umbu Hamala, the Priest-Deity, ignored his wife and died overseas, how did he become the father of Umbu Majewang, the Ancestor of the king's clan? The myth of Umbu Hamala himself, which serves equally as the clan myth of the Priestly clan and the king's clan, contains the explanation. According to this myth, one day after Umbu Hamala's departure for overseas, his wife left Wanggakoli to pick cotton at a riverside garden near Mboro Mbaku. She did not know that she was pregnant nor did she notice that while in the garden a tiny clot of blood dropped from her body. The next day an ancient noblewoman from Mboro Mbaku, Rambu Konga Pingu (*pingu* means knowledge, wisdom) found the clot, wrapped it in cotton, and inquired who had come to pick cotton the day before. Taking the tiny bundle home with her, she placed it in a sacred gong in the roof of the Marapu house and went into seclusion, calling for continual prayer-sacrifice ceremonies. The clot slowly developed into a human foetus, and, after nine (or ten) months, the baby cried. It was taken down from the sacred roof and shown to the community.

The critical part of the story concerns giving a name to the miracle baby, an important event, for one's essence and destiny is encompassed in one's name. The first name given was Mbai Talu Tjunu (*Mbai*, great, great many; *tal*, to win; *tjunu*, to roast), referring to the great number of sacrifice-animals roasted, that is, how many prayer and divining ceremonies were held in order to bring this infant to life. After a while, the Elders became dissatisfied with

this open reference to the process by which the child came into existence.

Concerning the selection of a new name, the various informants diverge, perhaps according to the point of view of their particular clan. Elders close to the king consider this baby Umbu Majewang, the Ancestor of the king; others call it Umbu Hamala or some other Deity who produces the son (or grandson) who is Umbu Majewang. All the Deities named belong to the three Priest-Deity houses or the other Ana Matjua lineage, the *uma djangga* or high house, which is considered the elder of the present king's lineage, the *uma bara* or white (new) house. These now rank as lesser houses no longer possessing royal members, and as a result these various Deities receive less attention than Umbu Majewang, Ancestor of the present king.

In another version, the child's identity as the son of Hamala was not revealed until a big conference of the great Deities at Mboro Mbaku. The child put a bit of dried fish inside the big drum used on ceremonial occasions, with the result that a mouse ate a hole in the drum so that it would not resound at the conference. The Deities used divination for months seeking the culprit who ruined the drum (a symbol of communal communication). Then the youth stepped forward and revealed the secret of his miraculous parentage and birth. Divination confirmed his assertions.

This mythic incident explains the special hold the ruler of Kapunduk has over other leaders through his control of the critical dried fish supply.

All versions agree that after his maturity, the clans of Kapunduk appealed to the conference at Mboro Mbaku to send him to Kapunduk because they had no royal ruler (or Priest-Deity). This was the place of his destiny, so he went. He received the *Kandutuku Ndjara* (the Hitching Post) and the *Rambahu Karambo* (the Switch for Buffalo), which, according to the Sumbanese, symbolize supreme powers over livestock, all of which the king in fact controls.

Thus Umbu Majewang reached Kapunduk as an *ana matjua* (the name of his clan), a "mature child," a youth wise beyond his years of whom it is said, "he matured ahead of all others," "he is the first to know, his judgment supercedes that of all others." Foreknowledge and judgment are considered the king's main functions. He does not work, and all must report their activities to him. He appoints functionaries to gather information on activities within each clan. His judgment function is embodied in his Negotiator, entitled, "Mother of all Thinking, Father of all Calculation" (*Ina Kaha Kira, Ama Kaha Diha*).

This myth of remarkable birth reflects an unconscious evaluation by the Elders that the kingship of Kapunduk has an unusual feature compared to traditional Ratu organization and values. The myth acknowledges a break between Umbu Hamala, the brother of Umbu Ndataia who as Priest-Deity is himself the royal ruler of the community, and the reborn Umbu Hamala whose identity is difficult to distinguish from that of the king's Ancestor, Umbu Majewang, who has in term of leadership taken over the powers and the identity of the Priest-Deity.

Umbu Majewang, the king's Ancestor, was not one of the first divine arrivals, nor was he a normal descendant of the Priest-Deity. Nevertheless, he has the full support of the Priest-Deities--he is the miraculous child of Hamala from Wanggakoli and he was raised by Konga Pingu at Mboro Mbaku. By being linked to these centers, he shares the sacredness and the legitimacy of the great Priest-Deities. At the same time, his miraculous birth shows him as a supernatural being, not an ordinary human, such an exceptional being that all efforts of the great Priest-Deities are directed toward him. Though a younger element he is omniscient, wiser than the hoary Ratu in conference. Further, the people of Kapunduk recognize his superiority and want him to assume supremacy over them. This myth surely reflects in the minds of the Elders the ascendancy of the king in Kapunduk over the Priest-Deity. It is striking that the legitimizing value accorded to the Priest-Deity and the Ratu centers persists. This value is, however, supernaturally attached to Umbu Majewang, ana matjua, thus acknowledging the superior powers and role of the king's ancestor Deity. The myth presents a culmination of history in symbolic value terms.

In order to grasp the myths then, we must begin with some knowledge of society's shape, but the image we see reflected in the myth greatly enriches and deepens our understanding of the functioning of that society and the minds of the people in it. The myth of the king's clan throws light on the concept of kingship in Kapunduk. Another Elder myth enriches our understanding of marriage, an extremely important institution in Sumba. It concerns that clan's right to take brides from a certain large clan. The myth belongs to a Deity of member-clan level, called Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku, who is found in all except one (Wunga) of the core communities of the Kapunduk district. In one of these communities, Mbata Puhu, the clan Mbara Papa possesses this Deity and their clan myth concerns relations with the clan Matolang, a large clan spread over several districts, from whom clan Mbara Papa is entitled to take brides. This version presented here was narrated by a renowned Spokesman of the Matolang clan in Kapunduk.

Rambu Pindu Ndjola was the sister of Umbu Patu Mbai (clan deity of Matolang) of the Lenang district (a district just over the border in West Sumba). In the capital village of Paliti was a big pig named Walu Ndawa Tada, Walu Leku Aparu, which belonged to Rambu Pindu Ndjola. It went to eat in the cornfields in Kambera (a district considerably to the south of Kapunduk) in the garden of Umbu Mau Ndima Anakemeha of Pandawai (a poetic term for Kambera and in the Kapunduk dialect interpreted as "place where there was no pig"). Umbu Mau Ndima saw the pig in his garden. "I will spear that pig," he thought, and he chased it. The pig ran out of the garden and through the open fields. Umbu Mau Ndima in pursuit kept his spear raised and ready but he could never quite reach the pig. It ran all the way back to Paliti and went straight under Rambu Pindu Ndjola's house and began to eat. Umbu Mau Ndima seeing the pig speared it. And so the pig died.

"Why did you kill it?" asked Rambu Pindu Ndjola, owner of the pig.

"It entered my garden and was eating my corn."

"Well, I didn't know that," replied the lady.

Her brother, Umbu Patu Mbai, arrived on the scene. "Separate them," people said, "or there'll be a fight."

"You, Umbu Mau Ndima, you have done wrong," said Umbu Patu Mbai, "You didn't ask first. That animal was a special pig reserved for a ceremony. You, Rambu, are at fault because your pig entered someone else's garden. Both of you together are in the wrong. Therefore, Rambu, you will become his wife. You, Umbu, I will give you a name. You will be called Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku. We will not go over and over these wrongs."

So they got married and the pig served as the official bride-gift pig. To this day Matolang gives brides to Mbara Papa.

In explaining the myth afterward, the narrator said that the fact that Umbu Patu Mbai chased the pig presaged the marriage--the phrase "*big* pig" refers to the kind of pig sacrificed at a marriage feast, given by the bride's father, a public act which shows his approval of the marriage.

The first element of the pig's name, Walu Ndawa Tada, refers to eight layers of fat on the pig's back; Walu Leku Aparu refers to eight strands of rope on which the fat from inside the pig is hung to dry.

The pig belongs to the girl; it is a tame pig which usually eats under the house or in a cultivated garden, but it runs far away. Within the community, pigs frequently enter a neighbor's garden, often leading to a pig-stabbing with resultant quarrels. But in this story, the garden where the pig eats is in the Kambera district, far away from the home of its owner in Lenang. In addition, for the storyteller and the clans in Kapunduk, the two places represent the limits of their contacts in the two directions.

If the pig represents the idea of marriage, it is feeding at a place where it should not rightfully be, that is, in the Umbu's distant garden. One could argue that the garden is in his mind, and he pursues the idea of marriage until it arrives in its proper place, the village of the girl, where he succeeds in getting his bride. But, in that case, the suitor should not be the one who stabs the pig because, in an actual marriage ceremony, the pig is sacrificed by the father or brother of the bride. Furthermore, the hero stabs this pig, not in the village square but under the house, a dirty place belonging to pigs where no proper, self-respecting Sumbanese adult would go--except a surreptitious lover who is lifted up through a hole in the house floor by a willing maiden. Such a lover, however, is usually a local inhabitant and not a proper marriage partner.

If he is such a lover, then the girl's pig running far beyond its limits into a man's garden may represent the girl's consent which would be essential to any clandestine relationship. One begins to see a connection with incest, for an incestuous relationship takes place within the immediate community but represents behavior considered beyond the limits for both parties. In the story, these two features are present both in terms of the pig eating in gardens and the relationship between the districts of the man and the woman. Moreover, the pig is not yet a marriage pig, for it is still running

free. It represents the girl's potential for marriage, her sexuality, which has heedlessly gone to its limits. The man, pursuing this sexuality, obtains it in a surreptitious way.

The remainder of the story follows the pattern of consequences for incest. When the Umbu's presence in the lady's village is known, he publicly admits his deed. The angry person who appears on the scene is the girl's brother who is responsible for marrying off his sister and who already had plans for the pig in a ceremony, that is, a proper marriage. Both lovers are censured, the erring male is fined. His change in name might be compared to a change in clan membership usually required to rectify an incestuous relationship. Only after the change is he permitted to marry the girl in a proper ceremony at which the pig becomes the traditional marriage gift.

The new name, Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku, then takes on meaning: *tolu wai* meaning "pig-meat"; *walu* is "eight;" and *mandoku* comes from the phrase "na ndoku na hala wahu" meaning when ceremonially dividing the preferred slices on the pig's back, the eighth piece was short. Since eight full slices of the ceremonially-sacrificed pig would signify something considered perfect, the name, indicating that the eighth part was short, acknowledges that this kind of marriage is less than perfect. A broader interpretation derives from another meaning of the word *walu* which in its archaic and poetic form means "from." Thus the name would read, "pig-meat (the fine/the bridal gift) coming from those who have erred," this marriage having resulted from the errors of both parties.<sup>8</sup>

This interpretation of the myth is supported by evidence of a close association elsewhere between this Deity and another definitely concerned with incest. An Elder from Parai Natang, on the southern flank of the Kapunduk River settlement, remarked once that when the Deity Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku came to that area he was accompanied by the Deity usually called Tolu Mata Wai Maringu (Raw Meat Cold Water). Such a Deity is found in every capital village and is especially concerned with the sin of incest--sexual relations within the nuclear family or between members of one clan (formally classed as brothers and sisters), or between persons who within the traditional rules should not marry (such as a man and his father's sister's daughter). Such a violation of custom creates a dangerous "hot" situation. The Deity takes the sin and "cools" it, so that it does not endanger the community as a whole. When such a wrong is discovered, the fault must be admitted by the man and a fine paid to this Deity's house. After this ceremony, if a suitable means is found, such as one of the parties changing his clan membership, marriage may take place. The "raw meat" refers to the sacrifice-animal given as a fine and the "cold water" to that sprinkled on the audience in the prayer ceremony: both form the medium for "cooling" the violation.

Upon checking my charts of the houses in the various communities, I found that the two deities are either held by two houses of one

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8. Consistent with the Sumbanese preference for verbal screening play, I would also suggest that the heroine's name, Pindu Ndjola is probably a disguised reference, with a slight displacement of the vowel, for the phrase, pindu ndjala, which means "mistaken (or wrong) door."

clan or by two clans who are paired in ritual and for whom a common origin in one district outside Kapunduk is claimed. This common origin I interpret as indicating that the Deities, having come from the same area of traditional law, share ritual customs. This frequency seemed sufficient evidence that in the minds of the people, Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku and the Deity concerned with incest are closely linked.

Most birth stories for the great Deities reveal that they resulted from incestuous marriages between heavenly beings. In the case of the Deity Tolu Wai Walu Mandoku, however, it is the Deity himself who is involved in this violation, but the story takes a disguised form. And further he is permanently paired with the Deity who possesses the antidote procedures. The Deity who violates the marriage rules and the one who redresses the violation in order to restore the order are permanent parallel features of the ritual system. These Deities and the functions of their clans represent continuing processes in the life of the society.

As for the cosmic pig, Walu Ndawa Tada Walu Leku Aparu, his destiny is encapsulated in his name; only when sacrificed does he become the marriage pig; only when cut open are the eight layers revealed, the eight ropes strung. The cosmic structure of the pig, far from being out of place, is central to the meaning of the myth. The pig as a symbol of legal marriage is structured in eight sections because eight is what fulfills, what is perfect for the society. Fulfilling the ritual of marriage reinforces the structure of a well-formed society, which in turn reflects a vision of the cosmos, for they all share a common structure. The Elder's story of the pig, the marriage ritual, the community of eight levels and the eight-layered heaven and earth are a series of images reflecting each other.

### Garden Myths

In the Elder myths, we looked through the prism of one clan's awareness of its relations to society. Other myths exist which reflect an image of the community as a whole engaged in one of its major undertakings. These myths, the third type, are called *pangerangu la woka*, metaphorical stories in the garden. Garden myths also concern the adventures of Deities, especially the important, "big" stories, in which the hero is considered the "ancestor" of the garden's owner. The hero's name, Umbu Ndelu, becomes a screen for the name of the Deity, which is unmentionable before a general public. Because of the cost of sacrifices and associated ritual, such "big" myths can only be told at the harvest of large gardens, and the harvest must be a plentiful one.

Gathering a large harvest generates an excited and festive atmosphere far beyond the mundane task at hand. The remarkable and intense interest shared by all members of the community perhaps represents their response to the deeper, spiritual meaning of the occasion. In gathering the harvest, the group as a whole enacts together a ritual which will both produce and maintain the vitality and well-being of the community.

In the dry and rocky land of East Sumba, wet-rice fields and the buffalo needed to work those fields are traditionally the

exclusive possessions of royalty. For the community as a whole, the bounteous harvest of the royal rice-fields means the biggest, happiest festival celebration. It also represents a rare occasion for free mixing on the part of all class levels and of marriageable young people from many different clans and villages. In spite of its atmosphere of freedom, the work is carefully organized, the ritual associated with it is complex and demanding and, upon examination, the whole event is precisely and beautifully structured. To detail this would take us to far afield, but mention of it is important so that the discussion of the royal harvest here should be recognized as a bare sketch of the possibilities of the material.

The specific occasion for narrating the harvest myth is the evening before the rice-plants are cut. The narrator must be a prominent Spokesman with a talent for story-telling. The place is in or near the fields, the narrator sitting on a mat with his audience gathered around him, seated on the ground. The audience consists of persons of all classes who come to cut the harvest, many of them young people and children. The narrator formally addresses the audience as children.

The narration alternates with songs and lasts all night, beginning at darkness and continuing until dawn. From time to time, the narrator announces a critical moment in the story and the audience begins to sing a series of songs which comment on the delivery, but not on the substance, of the story. Unlike the narrator's solos, the choral responses do not form an integral part of the plot, although audience participation is considered essential to the continuation of the story and the progress of the hero.

Basically, the myth begins with a nobleman, the father of two or three children, who dies, leaving the family in poverty. The mother urges the boys to clear the fields for planting corn. The hero, Umbu Ndelu Mila (*mila* means poor), neglects his field work in order to dally secretly with a lady for whom he makes a small wooden textile-working apparatus. His mother, on going to plant the seed, finds only a small clearing made by the younger brother. She returns home and puts some wood shavings, a needle and a knife in the food prepared for Umbu Ndelu. Picking up fistfuls of food, Umbu Ndelu cuts his hand after which his mother urges him to go out in search of the heavenly Rambu Kahu, his proper bride. From the blood of his wound, a plant springs up. He climbs the plant, which magically develops eight levels, the last of which reaches the heavens. At each level, Umbu Ndelu has adventures, until in the eighth kingdom he obtains Rambu Kahu. They descend to earth and their wedding forms the climactic end of the story. The variations in different myths usually relate to the setting and the kind of magical adventures Umbu Ndelu experiences while searching for his bride.

In the previous two types of myths, the content of the myth belonged formally to a restricted group. The Ratu myth, the official possession of the Royal Priest house, can be told only by a certain Spokesman on the occasion of the Ratu Festival. With the Elder myths also, although adults generally are familiar with the main features of the plots, they consistently refuse to tell them, insisting that only the Elders know such stories. In contrast, everyone may know the harvest myth stories. Although formal delivery is limited to the talented few and the place is restricted to the garden at harvest time, the stories are an acknowledged possession of all

members of the society, and all know the substance, songs and patterns of action. The listeners must even participate in the performance. Further, people readily identify with the main characters, Umbu Ndelu and Rambu Kahu, whose names are commonly used as symbols of the Sumbanese man and woman.

The myth parallels the work-year in the gardens from the clearing of the fields to the season's climax, the harvest festival itself. Some time after the end of the old growing season, represented in the story by the father's death, the men of a Sumba community reluctantly take leave of their capital community and move into the dispersed fields, where, like Umbu Ndelu, with little ceremony and on an irregular basis, they begin clearing the fields. In this season the women, like Umbu Ndelu's girl friend in the story, work on cotton and weave textiles. There is much leisure time and people are free from the duties and surveillance of the village communities. It is indeed a time for dallying.

An especially close relation exists between the character of the early part of the story and the situation of the ordinary villagers. The crop to be planted in the hero's field is not rice, but corn, the crop of everyman. The language of the story is easily accessible to all, the action realistic, the family circumstances and the work in the fields stated in familiar terms.

From the time the mother plants the seed, "signs" (*tanda*) appear in the narrative: the wood shavings show that the mother knows what the youth has been doing; the needle represents her desire to make him "feel" her displeasure; and the knife stirs him to action. The next section brings sharp stylistic changes. From the moment Ndelu begins to climb the rising plant to the eight kingdoms, the story enters a wholly magical realm of fantastic adventures in which he is killed and returns to life. Further, he successfully achieves his aim, not through his own efforts, but through a magically-gifted companion, usually in bird form. These features suggest the interim period when the harvest is growing by a seemingly magical process and when the young people spend their days and nights guarding the gardens, alternately playing verbal games and daydreaming in the tree-houses.

The final section, during which the hero and his heavenly bride descend the eight levels of his former adventures, collecting treasures and princesses (as ladies-in-waiting) along the way, corresponds to the gathering-in of the harvest. At this point, too, the story shifts from a magical to an ideal plane, the hero drops the name Mila (poor) and assumes full royal stature. The shift of the story into royal hands also corresponds to the real situation. While work in the rice-fields is shared by everyone, the harvest belongs to the owner of the royal rice-fields, the king.

The royal marriage ritual at the culmination of the myth parallels the harvest festival itself, which in turn is patterned according to royal wedding procedures. First, the hundreds of people who come to cut the harvest wear, not their ordinary work clothes, but their most splendid, colorful, expensive garments--just the clothes they would wear to a wedding celebration. Near the gathered harvest in front of the rice-house, the king displays the traditional marriage gifts, jewelry and the head of the sacrificed "marriage" pig. That night, the first processing of the harvest

(separating grain from the chaff by stamping on it) is celebrated until dawn. The men stamp on the stalks in short bursts of vigorous dancing, to the accompaniment of ecstatic singing by the young women. At dawn, the rough chaff is discarded and the grain is sewn up inside a huge mat, the workers divide into two teams and a battle begins for possession of the rice by filling and hauling off as many baskets as can be wrested from the melee. This fight parallels the mock battle formerly held before the groom takes possession of the bride in order to carry her off to his village.

After this battle, the partially processed rice is stored in two large containers which are given a man's and a woman's names. Then, one night, when the harvest is in, all persons must put out their fires and leave the rice-house area for several hours, "so that the rice will multiply." This interval can be understood as a symbolic consummation of the "marriage" celebrated at the harvest feast. After this, a brief prayer ceremony marks the end of the harvest festivities.<sup>9</sup>

Just as the myth told within the Marapu house belongs to the Priests and the myth told on the porches belongs to the Elders, so the harvest myth can be said to belong to the king, the owner of the

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9. Because the biggest harvest I witnessed was in the Melolo district, I have described the sequence of ritual followed there. There are certain differences in Kapunduk ritual, partly connected with local harvesting conditions, but the basic pattern is the same. The myth plots are common to both areas.

The ritual preliminaries to the actual harvesting show that harvest season rites as a whole parallel marriage ritual. As the rice matures, a series of ceremonies begins which corresponds to the pattern of ceremonial negotiations initiating a marriage. It is as if the rice were to be married to the rice-fields, with the king and his Priest responsible for the ceremonies of the two sides. First, a large prayer ceremony is held at the main altar of the rice-fields. To this ceremony, the king invites his clan fellows, other clan chiefs and community leaders and all Deities related to the rice-fields. This parallels the first meeting held by a prospective groom with his clan fellows and friends to gain their support in raising the bride-price.

At this ceremony, the traditional gifts brought by the suitor making his first request to the bride's parents, that is, a horse and a gold decoration, are offered to the Deities of the rice who are addressed as mother and father. This is the only "life" ceremony in which a horse is used as a feast-sacrifice animal. Along with this offering, two bundles of sirih-pinang, joined together to form pairs of masculine and feminine signs, are laid on the altar. These signs, thus joined together, says the Priest, represent the basic meaning of the ceremony.

Subsequent ritual, that is, prayer and offerings in the fields at four locations which are ceremonially referred to by kinship names, correspond to the four ritual visits and exchange of gifts which are part of kinship ceremonials preliminary to a formal marriage.

royal rice-fields, and to all the people as his subjects. He is the one who sponsors the harvest, and the culminating event, the royal marriage ceremony, is basically the ritual which validates his prerogatives in the minds and hearts of his people.

All these myths present an image of the Sumbanese universe; they portray the Sumbanese in direct relation to the cosmos and to cosmic forces. The Ratu's house of eight levels, by which he organizes the capital village, the Elder's pig and the adventures of Umbu Ndelu, all exhibit a common pattern of eight levels, a structure they share with the cosmos. These images act as a series of reflections of a fixed and ordained order which exists in a cosmic center. The Sumbanese say of their beliefs, customs and rites: they are reflections of what the great ancestors, the Marapu, saw in the heavens and brought down with them to earth. This explanation is summarized in a frequently-heard phrase of ritual songs, as follows:

<i>na pangandina la inana</i>	what was brought by the mother
<i>na pangandina la amana</i>	what was brought by the father
	(are like)

<i>na ninuna la wai</i>	reflections on the water
<i>na mauna la mara</i>	shadows on the dry land

The purpose or intent of the myths is to convey the present image of self and, by reflection, the cosmos. Why should this purpose appear in such disguised form, amid such inverted and involved complexities? Why is this image cast in the form of symbols and in such obscure terms? Just because this image is a self-image. Self-assessment does not readily appear in outspoken form. Frank analysis in regard to self is a specialized culture trait only recently emphasized and not widely accepted in most human societies.

But what good is it if the listeners themselves do not understand it, if they are not aware of the meaning? These myths are works of art and as such their techniques and purpose are subordinated to their effect. Listeners respond, they enjoy the intricacies and the elaborations for their own sake. Further, they feel the stories are just right. They feel the truth of the stories so strongly because the relation between the weighted symbols corresponds to the relationship of values within their own image.

Accepting the Kapunduk myths as self-images means we can better understand otherwise puzzling attitudes in relation to storytelling. No effort is made to teach young people the stories, they are even discouraged from knowing them (except for the garden myths). Further, no young person dares to tell the three types of myths. Even adults with seamed faces and graying hair will insist that "our faces are too smooth," to deal in such matters, meaning they are too young, too inexperienced. Even though they sit in at the rituals and interminable conferences and in their own personal sphere manipulate the system to survive, it is true they do not know enough to handle myths. They are not responsible for the system. It is the Elders and the Spokesmen who must shape and formulate the stories. They are responsible for managing and

maintaining the cloth of the whole society and after a lifetime of this work, they are sensitive to its immediate state. They are the ones who at the unconscious level gain some command of the power positions, beliefs, feelings, values, preferences, and attitudes that are at work in the society and the proportion and relationship of these social elements--all of which is necessary in order to formulate a self-image. Above all, it is the talented ones, the important Spokesmen famed as story-tellers who, as artists, are most sensitive to these subconscious uncatalogued social substances and relationships. Using a traditional inventory of plots and phrases, which he consciously memorizes, the artist will create stories which project an image of social units and the society. Out of his layer of creative consciousness, stories cast in traditional dress spring fully-shaped without conscious effort to his mind, put there, he believes, by the Marapu. Failing an inspired story-teller, a group of knowledgeable Elders will grope, haltingly bring forth fragments, incidents and impressions, and together push and pull them into shape until they are satisfied with the effect in relation to their conception of the clan or group. What they are formulating is a "past," a past that accords with their present state of mind. For us, who write on stone, the past is fixed, the present is changing. For them, it is different. They hold fast to the present and change their "history" accordingly, for that "past" is really a reflected image of the present, an image which brings them a heightened awareness of their grip on existence and an assurance that they have a place in the stable order of the present.