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In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 136 (1980), no: 1, Leiden, 90-115

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AFFINES AND THE DEAD: MAMBAI RITUALS OF ALLIANCE

I. *Introduction*

In protesting the arbitrarily bounded classes which the analytic vocabulary of anthropology tends to create, Rodney Needham remarks: "... you cannot understand the marriage institution without knowing the forms of co-operation which follow from it" (1971: 7). And he goes on to quote Hocart's characteristically bracing comment, "There is much more to the cross-cousin system than the classification of relatives; there is a whole theology..." These two remarks map the ground covered in this paper.

The topic is the relation between co-operation in mortuary ritual and patterns of affinal alliance, and the inquiry leads into metaphysical and cosmological aspects of social life.¹ The subjects are the Mambai, an Austronesian-language people who inhabit the mountainous interior of East Timor. The focus is the ritual architecture of alliance, more specifically, the obligatory marital and mortuary exchanges which subtend alliance relations.

II. *The Ritual System*

For man is at the center of creation; it is for him to manipulate and direct for the better the redoubtable forces which bring life and death.

R. Hertz, 'The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand'

All Mambai ritual is phrased and performed in an idiom of exchange. Not only does every ritual event entail formal transactions of goods and

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services, but ordinary and poetic discourse portray the total ritual process as a prestation offered to the divinities in return for life and well-being. To the Mambai, ritual is an obligatory service which secures the order of society and cosmos.

This ritual service is polarized into categories of 'white' (*buti*) and 'black' (*meta*). White ritual includes the yearly round of agricultural ceremonies. In its entirety, the white cycle regulates agricultural production from sowing time to harvest time. Performances involve the 'elder and younger' (*kaka nor ali*) branches of a maximal agnatic descent group or 'house' (*fada*). They unite at the ceremonial village of origin, known as the 'house and homestead' (*fada nor ria*), where the younger lines present offerings of food and service to their elders, the acknowledged ritual custodians of the land.

Black rituals chart the several stages attributed to the afterlife, beginning with the funeral and culminating, usually many years later, in a spectacular ceremony wherein the dead are sent away to the sea. Although organized by a core of close agnates, all black performances mobilize a set of connubially contracted relations. From the funeral to the final rites of dispatch, the affinal relatives of the deceased engage in obligatory gift-exchanges with the surviving agnatic kin. These several mortuary payments are viewed as the closing stages in exchange relations initiated by the marriages of the dead and their descendants.

Thus a social division of "ritual labor" accompanies the symbolic polarity of white and black. The white regulation of agricultural production and the black disposal of the dead are assigned to collectivities of agnates and affines respectively. Yet while the duality of ritual life is associated with different modes of social relatedness, a single ritual structure brackets white and black activities. A principle of complementarity orders the polarity of ritual categories, identifying white and black as the interdependent elements of a whole (Traube 1977). This complementarity is manifest in the poetically stated premise of ritual life:

<i>Buti ba rat</i>	When white is not enough
<i>Nor meta fe tlut.</i>	Increase it with black.
<i>Meta ba natou</i>	When black is not sufficient
<i>Nor buti fe naur.</i>	Augment it with white.

The ritual labors of agnates and affines complete each other, and my purpose is to explain the social allocation of ritual tasks. In this paper, I focus on only one aspect of the system, the logical and sociological association of affines with death.²

While much more limited in scope, the kind of investigation I propose bears a resemblance to Hertz's classic analysis of lateral symbolism (1909).³ Hertz sought to explain the pre-eminence of the right hand and the pronounced impurity of the left through an inquiry into collective representations. Not content to note the apparently universal proclivity towards lateral asymmetry, he asked why right and left should be attributed such particular social and ritual functions, and he resolutely pursued "the genesis of an imperative which is half aesthetic, half moral" (Hertz 1973: 6-7). The problem confronted in this paper is of a similar nature: to account for the affinity of *particular* categories of persons for *particular* ritual activities. Proceeding by way of a representational system which is a fundamental aspect of Mambai exchange, I pursue the values, the conventions, the canons of appropriateness encoded in critical social metaphors which order ritual action.

An endeavor of this nature rests on the Maussian notion of exchange as a symbolic structure. In the circulation of wealth and wealth tokens, where others had seen a flow of material goods accumulated and distributed for material ends, Mauss discerned a perpetual play of representations, an intermingling of persons, things, spirits, rights — "which was in a word uneconomic" (Mauss 1954: 52). Mauss's "total prestation" (the central analytic concept of *The Gift*) is at once economic, social, religious, aesthetic, legal, jural, etc., and it is all of these because it is meaningful. The gesture of prestation expresses and so secures rank, prestige, power, rights; the gift object evokes the giver to whom it is symbolically bound; it is a haunting token of a contract; offered to the gods, it is a sign of piety; to accept it represents an acknowledgment of friendship and intercourse, a pledge of assistance, a tacit promise of future returns. In Mauss's penetrating inquiry, the circulation of persons and things becomes a rich and complex system of communication.

Mauss's insistence on the supra-economic nature of exchange has long since woven its way into anthropological discourse.⁴ For Lévi-Strauss, the deeper value of Mauss's essay lies in the implicit rapprochement between linguistics and anthropology, a rapprochement heralded earlier in Saussure's definition of semiology: "On peut donc concevoir une science qui étudie la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale".

Lévi-Strauss's grand treatise on kinship and marriage systems (1949; English edition 1969) represents his first major contribution to his broadly conceived semiological program. The theme is communication, the communication of women. Building on Mauss's remarks characterizing marriage as an exchange of women, Lévi-Strauss investigates the

"elementary" forms matrimonial exchange assumes and the types of solidarity it promotes. If social solidarity is the product of the exchange of women, the marriage system itself is lucidly defined as the necessary product of a symbolic operation. The entire structure of marital alliance rests on the transformation of persons into signs which, like linguistic signs, serve a function of communication: "The emergence of symbolic thought must have required that women, like words, should be things that were exchanged" (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 496).

Yet Lévi-Strauss perceives a tension between the function and substance of the matrimonial sign. As an element within a system of communication, the function of woman is to be given away to others. As a person, the unique embodiment of reproductive vitality, she is too precious, too valuable to be relinquished. The tension, Lévi-Strauss suggests, can never be entirely resolved, and it finds expression in the marital transaction itself.⁵ If woman is defined as a sign, her significance is that of a "generator of signs" (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 496); if she is the vehicle of an alliance, the alliance is constituted by the consecutive loss and acquisition of the means of renewal. Communication in the marital "language" is a veritable transmission of life, and this, as I shall argue, may be a more elementary concern than solidarity.

Indeed, notions of generative power are not peculiar to marriage exchange. Mauss himself laid considerable stress on the "productive capacity" of precious talismans, in which he saw an ancient, "magico-religious" aspect of exchange (Mauss 1954: 43). In a recent re-analysis of Mauss's "master concept" of the *hau*, Sahlins (1972) discerns a broad "principle of productiveness" as the essence of the elusive Maori concept. In Maori usage, the *hau* signifies both the material yield on a gift and the fertilizing, generative power of nature.

Such conceptions of exchange suggest that an inquiry into the symbolism of productivity and life is critical to an understanding of affinal alliance. There may, in fact, be an advantage to viewing the exchange of women as one technique amongst others of regulating generative powers, rather than as an instrument for promoting solidarity. (As Mauss might say, "the advantage is in realism"). For marriage alliance is, of course, something more than the rules and terms which codify it. Its total significance is perhaps best apprehended in concrete ritual contexts, in those obligatory and stylized activities oriented around particular, culturally significant events. On such occasions, social behaviour has a peculiar density, for many ideas and interests are at play. In this respect, Mambai mortuary rituals resemble such phenomena as the

Melanesian kula or the potlatch of the American northwest coast.

When Mambai affines meet in their 'black' reunions, wealth is transmitted, status is secured and enhanced, alliances are confirmed and renewed through ritual exchanges. And all this surely belongs to an explanation of the rites. One should not forget, however, that Mambai meet to dispose of their dead who pass beyond the social universe with all its concerns. As with Nuer sacrifice, though Mambai ritual activity "is part of their social life and takes place within it they conceive it as expressing essentially a relationship between man and something which lies right outside his society" (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 286).

Mambai ritual participates more closely in the regulation of social life than do the personal, piacular sacrifices which Evans-Pritchard found most characteristic of Nuer religion. Nonetheless, a unique inquiry into the social implications of mortuary exchange does not plumb the significance of death in Mambai thought, and does not capture the totality of their rites. Death rituals are lodestones which attract a set of cultural concerns. If they are a forum for discharging connubially contracted social obligations, the Mambai insistently, even vehemently, locate these same rituals within a system of cosmological obligations.

I shall approach this dovetailing of ritual obligations by way of the mortuary role of affines, examining the sociology and the symbolic categories of affinal exchange. These social transactions themselves refract a cosmological contract, and ideas of the person, an area to which Mauss also called attention (1938), provide the critical nexus. Amongst the Mambai, and indeed throughout eastern Indonesia, affinal exchange obligations are persistently, often powerfully inscribed in a pan-Austro-nesian conception of the human person (cf. Fox forthcoming). Yet this conception is but one expression of the nature of life, one particular inscription, written in flesh, blood, bone and spirit, of a pervasive cultural text. Thus the way is open for a passage from society to cosmos.

III. *Sociology and Symbolism of Exchange*

Time has to pass before a counter-prestation can be made. Thus the notion of time is logically implied when one pays a visit, contracts a marriage or an alliance . . . renders ritual and honorific service . . .

M. Mauss, *The Gift*

In Mambai society, the past and present movements of men and women define the social universe of any ego-group, a universe maintained by white and black ritual activities. Each translocation implies a social as well as physical movement, but the translocations of men have different

social consequences from those of women. The distinction is a major structural feature of Mambai society.

For males, the journey involves quitting an ancestral 'house' (*fada*) to establish one's own. The 'house' in question here is both a material and a symbolic structure. It is the ceremonial or 'cult house' (*fad lisa*), not a residence, but a descent group temple where ancestral sacra are stored. These temples are located within 'homesteads' (*ria*), cleared areas of varying size where the sacred rocks and trees of the group reside.

In myth it is always a younger brother who makes such a journey, gathering up a few heirlooms, plucking a branch from the tree, pocketing a small rock (which he may name after the 'mother-father' rock of his birthplace), and leaving his elder siblings to 'look after their mother // watch over their father' (*deiki ro ni inan // bale ro ni aman*). The new house and homestead he eventually founds will be known as the 'child' (*ana*), 'younger brother' (*ali*) or 'branch' (*ota*) of the origin place. Ritually, the two are one house.

Such is the mythological model of descent group segmentation, and present social reality tends to follow a similar pattern. A single 'trunk' (*fu*) or 'mother-father' (*ina-ama*) house supports a continually ramifying array of 'branch' houses founded by roaming younger sons. Within this male-ordered structure, component lines are classified as 'elder and younger' (*kaka nor ali*), and the rule is that younger lines must participate in the white rituals of the elders. Thus the agnatic affiliations within the branching descent group are maintained by ritual obligations.

Female movements are situated within marital transactions. At marriage, a woman passes from her natal house to that of her husband and 'enters the man's cult' (*tam mane ni lisan*), i.e. assumes the ritual duties and prohibitions of his descent group. Like the wanderings of men, the circulation of women engenders important ritually maintained ties.

Any marriage establishes an alliance between agnatic groups, and these alliances are perpetuated over time. The system is sustained by a matrilineal prescription and marriage rule.⁶ Every named ego-group recognizes three mutually exclusive categories of persons: *kaka nor ali*, 'elder and younger brothers', including groups claiming agnatic relations and those sharing an affinal link with ego; *umaena*, 'wife-givers', including all groups from which ego has received women; *maen heua*, 'wife-takers', including all groups to which ego has given women. Thus any descent group may be defined as a male-ordered unit embedded in a wider social universe through the movements of women.⁷

Whereas agnatic relations are distinguished in terms of elder and

younger male siblings, the cross-sex sibling pair is often used to express affinal relations between groups. In this classification, wife-giving and wife-taking affines are represented by the kinship relation of a brother (*nara*) to the sister (*tbo*) whom he relinquishes. Alternately, the affinal connection is specified in terms of the tie between a son (*ana manen*) and a daughter (*ana hinan*), a usage characteristic of mortuary ritual which reunites these children to honor their deceased parents. In yet another sexual categorization, the relation is conveyed in a blood idiom which identifies wife-givers as 'male blood' (*lar-manen*) and wife-takers as 'female blood' (*lar-hinan*).

The exchange of gift items conforms to the same sexually opposed categories. In the formal pattern of affinal prestations, 'male' goods circulate against 'female' goods, and groups are symbolically identified with the objects they receive. Wife-takers provide the 'male' gifts (water-buffalo, goats, sheep, horses, metal disks) and are reciprocated with 'female' gifts (pigs, cloths, necklaces, cooked food). Typically, the initial marital payments are materially abbreviated and linguistically de-valued. At most, wife-takers may provide a goat or a horse, referred to as a 'papaya leaf' (*kaidil-noran*), in return for a simple meal of cooked rice and pork described as 'bitter coffee' (*kafe felun*). The costlier transactions are those associated with mortuary ritual.

Within the system of affinal obligations, mortuary transactions appear as a form of delayed payment imposed on both sides. The socially critical point is that payment *must* be delayed, that the maritally based obligations can *only* be fulfilled with the passage of time. Implied in any marriage is an element of imbalance which endures as long as the relationship, or better still, constitutes the relationship, and which is institutionalized by the organization of ritual exchange obligations. Imbalance is here, as Sahlins has suggested of marriage exchange in general, "socially of the essence" (Sahlins 1972: 222).

What needs stressing, however, is the mutual character of social imbalance which precludes any notion of the "purchase" of a woman. Affinal gift-exchanges constitute the price of an alliance relationship paid by both parties. While material prestations are weighted in the favor of wife-givers who receive the costlier, 'male' goods, the maritally based debt is and remains reciprocal. The protagonists know that in contracting the alliance, they pledge themselves to render up something more in the course of rituals of death.

Mambai themselves are sensitive to the power of exchange transactions to entangle them with one another, creating twisting chains of

material obligations. A man's marital payments presage mortuary payments which he will only be able to meet through the marriages of his own sisters and daughters. Moreover, given the protracted ritual treatment of death, this man may well die before he has fulfilled his mortuary obligations, leaving his son to 'stand in the father's place' (*mri dar aman ni hatin*). Thus particular affinal debts are often transmitted from one generation to the next, and though a young man is free to initiate a new alliance, he does not escape the obligations of the past.

In sociological terms, the purpose of the interval between marital and mortuary payments is alliance, secured through the total circulation of women, goods and ritual services. The exchange of women initiates what only death exchange can consummate. As Mauss remarked in his observations on the origin of credit, a notion of time is, indeed, implied in any marriage, and articulated in the forms of ritual co-operation which marriage entails.

The indigenous logic of affinal exchange juxtaposes alliance to human mortality. Thus temporality appears as the essential condition of Mambai alliance, caught up as it is in the continual flux of marriages and deaths, of obligations contracted and discharged. Affinity is categorically prescribed by the relationship terminology, and Mambai value the perpetuation of particular alliances, but such continuity is premised on the diachronic succession of marriages, the repeated-renewal of connubial ties which otherwise endure only so long as the dead linger to monitor them.

Native sociology recognizes the temporal nature of affinal alliance and contrasts it to agnation. The latter is indestructible. An agnatic affiliation can lose sociological relevance (the index being a lapse of ritual obligations), but common descent is formally acknowledged, and the relation between houses separated since mythic times remains one of 'brothers'.⁸ Alliance is less certain for, as Mambai say, 'the paths of women and men twist here and there' (*hin-dan nor maen-dan kleu ma kleu la*), and affinal relationships can be dissolved or reclassified over time.

These facts are encoded within collective representations of male and female. Viewed in the context of Mambai symbolic classification, the structurally critical dualism of social ties is linked to congruent conceptions of the cosmos and the person as the joint creation of male and female. Thus procreative processes assume both cosmological and social meanings. They express cosmological creation and recreation, for the cosmos is born out of the originary union of a male heaven and a female earth, and renewed each year through their ritually negotiated en-

counters. These same processes are drawn on to articulate the nature of the social order.

The formal Mambai doctrine of conception is a variant on the widespread pattern wherein bone and flesh are created from paternal semen and maternal blood respectively. Mambai identify filiation to the father with the paternal transmission of bone, and filiation to the mother with the maternal transmission of blood and flesh. As a social metaphor, the opposition of hard bone to soft blood and flesh associates forms of relatedness with a duality of immutable and alterable elements, expressing a crucial distinction between the lasting, perduring, 'hard' character of agnatic connections and the more perishable, 'soft' connections established through women.

The maternal contribution to procreation operates as a *synechdoche* for affinity. The blood which a woman carries out of her own group and transmits to her children is used to represent marital relations as a flow of blood on which each male line depends for its reproductive vitality. Seen from the perspective of alliance *groups*, this life-giving flow is broken down into 'male' and 'female' constituents. 'Male blood' is defined as that which flows *out* of a group with the out-marrying woman, and 'female blood' as the same vital substance flowing *into* the group which receives the woman. Women are thus the vessels of a socially bifurcated fluid essential to procreation.⁹

In a pervasive social metaphor, the unilateral circulation of women is represented as a continually ramifying tree, a dense tangle of complexly interrelated limbs supported on a sturdy trunk. With the succession of generations, women pass upward and outward to ever more remote boughs, branches and twigs of the tree. In the consanguineal idiom, this endless botanic growth of women is described as a forking flow of blood which courses through receiving groups. Sociologically, the product of this flow is a branching formation constituted by lines of maternal affiliation.

If only for the sake of symmetry, it would be agreeable to find agnatic relations collectively expressed in an idiom of bone. However, as Huntington warns in a discussion of similar procreative notions amongst the Bara of Madagascar, there is a tendency for ethnographers to over-systematize such ideas, making more extensive use of them than the people themselves (Huntington 1978: 50). In all events, Mambai did not, in my experience, balance the consanguine idiom of affinity with an "osteal" idiom of agnation, and the absence is interesting in that it subtly distances agnation from notions of procreation.

Overall, bone plays a noticeably muted role in Mambai symbolism — noticeable in the light of the heavy emphasis laid on blood and flesh which we shall observe in mortuary ritual. As a material icon, bone scarcely enters into ritual life, for Mambai neither practice secondary burial nor construct permanent tombs to mark the graves of their dead ancestors. Descent groups look elsewhere for representations of their enduring nature; they find them, significantly enough, in metal objects which mythological traditions trace back to the bones of Father Heaven.

Each agnatic line is intimately associated with the 'sacred objects' (*saun luli*) stored inside its temple. These are named, individuated heir-looms, such as swords, spears and breast-disks, passed down from a founding male ancestor. Like Mauss's magical talismans, these sacra have distinctive personalities and powers; and each possesses its own history, recorded in a set of narrative traditions known as the 'walk of sacred things' (*saun luli-ni lolain*).

The class of precious articles forms the inalienable, spiritual treasure of agnatic lines, and does not enter into affinal exchange transactions. Rather, the circulation of sacred things accompanies the movements of men. Borne by roaming younger sons, an ancestral patrimony is gradually scattered and distributed amongst newer 'branch' houses, each transmission constituting another step in its 'walk'.

Inheritance of sacra is the primary idiom of white ritual obligation. Younger lines join in the ritual activities of their elders 'because their sacred objects went out from that house', because the elder treasure is the 'mother and father' of their own. Eager to join in the festivities, the sacra are said to draw their owners along after them. What binds the constituents of an agnatic collectivity is not only the ancestry of men, but the ancestry of swords, spears and disks. The class of precious articles operates as a unifying framework, a metaphorical skeleton of metal symbolizing an indestructible form of relatedness. Successive collateral branchings of male lines may segment a descent group and scatter its ancestral patrimony, but the common origin and steadfast wills of the sacred objects testify to the immutable unity of agnates.

While agnatic relations are associated with this inalienable ancestral wealth, affinal alliances entail the continual cycling of a more mobile class of objects, the material gift items exchanged in marital and mortuary transactions. The wealth a group amasses through the marriages of its daughters soon flows out again, either to bring in wives or to fulfill mortuary obligations. 'Male' goods are converted into 'female' goods and back again; buffalo go to 'meet' pigs, pigs to 'meet' buffalo, as the

owners pivot between their wife-givers and wife-takers, between marital payments and mortuary payments.

The women who are the fulcrum for these rotations of goods are themselves associated with objects which contrast neatly to the durable articles of agnatic wealth. Native poetry portrays in-marrying women as weavers of baskets and mats. This female activity provides a formulaic motivation for marriage. In ancestral traditions, unmarried men search for women:

Oid nan diru nor taka To weave winnowing baskets and
covered baskets

Oid nan bita nor bora. To weave grass mats and pandanus mats.

These articles are used in the ordinary and ritual preparation and serving of food.¹⁰ Thus in-married women are metonymically associated with objects integral to the culinary routines of domestic and ceremonial life, objects which, like the life-giving women who weave them, are made of perishable, ephemeral substances.

These several features of agnation and affinity are encoded within a complementary relation of male and female: maleness signifies a changeless, eternal, but sterile order, and femaleness an alterable, temporal, but life-giving vitality. In Mambai thought, order is static and perduring, while vitality is both dynamic and evanescent. Existence is based on a ritually secured balance of the two.

On the cosmic plane, this dualism is displayed in the divine figures of Father Heaven, the deathless male who ordered the land, binding the shifting soil with bones of rock, and his consort, the Earth Mother, who first moulded the soil and then gave of her own decayed flesh to enrich it, and who remains forever subject to the cycles of birth and death, fertility and depletion, which the alternation of the seasons imposes upon the land. The congruent dualism is manifested on the social plane as a necessary complementarity of social relations. The very endurance of agnatic lines depends on the perishable lines of life-giving alliances. The social allocation of mortuary obligations breaks up these female-ordered lines into overlapping, triadic segments composed of an ego-group, its wife-takers and wife-givers.

IV. *Mortuary Ritual*

Were one to ask a Mambai man why he had decided to perform the last stage of black ritual, he would probably reply: "to pay for the fatigue of my mother and father". Since their deaths, he would explain, he had honored them in a series of rites,¹¹ but now the time had come for the

living and the dead 'to separate from one another' (*oid ket ro*). And he might add that he had accumulated enough pigs to sponsor the final ceremony known as the *maeta*, 'the dead' or 'rites of the dead' (from *maet*, 'to die').

Sponsorship is always collective. A man acts in concert with his brothers and other close agnates who have their own dead to send away.¹² The relation amongst sponsors is expressed as one of 'elder and younger brother'. Together these men form the class of ritual participants referred to as 'masters of mortuary' (*maet-ubun*).¹³

Alone, these male-ordered 'masters' cannot satisfy the demands of the dead, but their inability reflects a social rather than an economic fact. For the dead crave more than material things, they desire courtesies and respect from their affines. They do not forget the contracts made during their lifetimes. A woman remembers the gifts promised to her natal family at her departure; a man thinks of his sisters and daughters given away to others. As the years pass, the ancestors goad the living into settling these marital affairs.¹⁴ From a certain point of view, it is the conscience of the dead that draws affines into black ritual. The Mambai convention that a conjugal couple must lead the ancestral host activates two sets of affinal obligations and situates the 'masters of mortuary' between their wife-giving and wife-taking relatives.

In ritual exchange transactions, this triad is broken down into two dyads as the 'masters' pivot between their wife-givers and wife-takers. The total circulation of wealth is represented as a single, reciprocal transaction which follows the maritally established relations of 'female and male blood'. Thus 'male' goods move from wife-takers to sponsors and onward to the latter's wife-givers, while 'female' goods move in the reverse direction (See Diagram 1).

The actual economics of exchange transactions are more complex than the reciprocal model suggests, for certain goods are not caught up in the total flux of wealth. The sponsors themselves must provide their wife-takers with a lavish feast of rice and pork to which their wife-givers are *not* obliged to contribute. (Hence the critical role of pigs in staging a *maeta*.) Conversely, not all of the wife-takers' prestations are passed on to the sponsors' wife-givers. Wife-takers, for example, are required to provide 'live and dead water-buffalo' (*arabau-morin nor maten*). The 'dead' beasts are the sacrifices dedicated to the ancestors, and the flesh is presented to the wife-giving participants. 'Live' animals are distributed at the end of the ceremony, and may be kept by the sponsors.

To put matters simply, if a man distributes enough pigs and 'female'

wealth, he will be reciprocated with a sufficient quantity of buffalo to satisfy his wife-givers' demands and still reserve something for himself. The trick is to 'prod' or 'quicken' (*hkas*) one's wife-takers, for if their prestations are prompt and generous, one can 'win' (*mnanan*), as Mambai say, i.e. withdraw from the ritual process of honoring the dead with a distinct economic profit. However, it must be remembered that wealth accumulated at one mortuary is distributed anew at another. The 'live water-buffalo' which a sponsor keeps will very likely be slaughtered when his own wife-givers summon him to *their* mortuary. The non-

Diagram 1: Model of mortuary exchange.

reciprocal exchange of women entails reciprocal ritual obligations, and wealth circulates within the total round of ceremonial activities. Thus 'winning' in a mortuary is not a matter of piling up economic assets, but of securing the wealth required to meet future ritual obligations.

The social consequence of these interlocking obligations is an extended circuit of exchange relations. Marital payments concern only wife-givers and wife-takers, but mortuary payments eventually draw any one ego-group into exchange transactions involving four categories of affinal relatives: wife-givers and wife-takers, givers of givers (*umaen tkeun*, 'neck wife-givers') and takers of takers (*ana-hina noran nor laun*, 'leaf and tip daughters') (see diagram 2). Thus it is the total black ceremonial of any one group which patterns its alliance relations. Unlike

some systems of asymmetric alliance, little emphasis is placed on linking groups in multi-partner marriage cycles.¹⁵ Mambai alliances are thrust outward in two directions rather than closed by the intergroup cycling of women. Ritual exchanges determine the limits of each group's alliance community.

In Mambai idioms, these limits are a matter of blood which 'goes out continually' (*sai molus*), relatedness to the source becoming weaker with each flux. Mortuary establishes the social relevance of blood affiliations by marking the points at which the obligations of donors and recipients

Diagram 2: Model of total mortuary participation.

terminate. If unilateral marriage exchange gives direction to a line of life, mortuary exchange imprints its social meaning.

Nor is mortuary ceremony restricted to the cataloguing of past alliances. It is also the prime operator in their perpetuation, for the actual continuity of any alliance depends on the fulfillment of death duties. To refuse to attend a mortuary is tantamount to the denial and severance of alliance; in Mambai evaluation, persons who shirk their obligations to the dead 'are not human beings' (*ba los atuba*). It is the supreme negation of reciprocity, and it undermines the established structure of affinal relations. Within the alliance system, mortuary represents both an obligation from the marital past and a gateway to the marital future. It is the threshold of life, and this idea is the key to the sociology and symbolism of black ritual.

All mortuary exchanges are formally subsumed within an idea of obligation to the dead, to whom gifts are dedicated. The idiom of mortuary exchanges characterizes death as the culmination of a process of depletion undergone during life, and now requiring restitution. Gifts are given to 'pay for the fatigue and prostration of the dead' (*seul maeta ni kolen nor lelan*), in recompense for the life-giving properties now wasted, drained, and decayed. This notion is elaborated in imagery of body (*etan*) and spirit (*smakan*), and the emergent idea is that the spirit must be recompensed for the previous expenditure of bodily substance. Thus exchange obligations are intimately associated with the particular events dramatized in performance: the disintegration of the body and the travels of the spirit. Although the final mortuary ceremony takes place long after the actual burial and decomposition of the corpse, it preserves this dual story line, opening with a re-enactment of death and proceeding as if the material to be disposed of were a real human body.

The inaugural rites consist of an elaborate charade wherein a mortar and pestle representing the ancestors are said to sicken and die. Through this conceit the ensuing ceremonial of the *maeta* proper is detached from the prior sequence of post-burial services, and identified as a rather grand funeral intended to separate the living from the dead (*ket morin nor maten*). Separation is predicated on the formal disassociation of body and spirit, and is ritually represented as the product of a double passage. Thus the *maeta* as a whole takes the form of an intricate journey narrative organized around the body's descent to the earth and the spirit's trek southward to the mountain of origins and thence northward to the sea.

In performance these passages are enacted with the aid of visual signs. Ancient satchels (*biota*), the property of the ancestors during their lifetimes, signify the body and are solemnly buried in a key ritual sequence which replicates the original funeral. The spirits of the dead are associated with the horns of the sacrificial water buffalo provided by wife-taking affines in the course of the several stages of mortuary ceremony. These horns are hung on a post where they accumulate until the climactic rite of the *maeta*.

Ritual action in the *maeta* is bisected into segments reflecting the stages of passage. All rites up to and including the 'dispatch of the dead' (*maet tolin*) to the mountain belong to the stage of ascent. Sacrifices performed during this stage are known as 'ascending meat' (*sis sain*), and are addressed to the ancestral spirits who must be richly provisioned for their imminent journey. Yet the theme of bodily suffering forms a

grim counterpoint to the festive proceedings, for the gifts of livestock and clothing tendered to the spirits are given in honor of the 'urn that is rotten // vessel that is decayed' (*uisa be broe // bia be dome*), the bodies which the spirits must now abandon.

These prestations culminate in the sacrifice of great numbers of water buffalo provided by the wife-takers and dedicated to their particular wife-giving ancestors. The beasts are slain immediately prior to the rites of dispatch wherein the spirits are verbally conducted along the sacred path leading to the mountain. As the spirits depart, they are instructed to carry away the 'bad breast // bad horn' (*susu klaun // diu klaun*) of the buffalo sacrifices, and to 'leave behind the flesh of the garden // leave behind the water of the palm' (*lui nam isin // lui nau eran*), a formulaic expression for fertility and prosperity.

The next day is given over to dancing and feasting in celebration of the spirits' arrival at their mountain home. This marks the close of the first stage of the *maeta* and opens the second, the stage of descent in which both body and spirit are actively involved. Sacrifices performed during this latter stage, whether directed to body or spirit, are referred to as 'descending meat' (*sis dun*).

The descent of the dead begins when the ancestral satchels are carried to the graveyard and interred in a rite suffused with oratorical and ostensive invocations of fertility. As the burial rite unfolds, the prosperity which the spirits were instructed to 'leave behind' is associated with the putrescent "corpses" now lowered into the earth.

The burial of their "bodies" opens the way for the final stage of the spirits' travels when they end their mountain sojourn and descend to the sea. In preparation for this event, the post of buffalo horns is dismantled and the horns are placed upon a bier referred to as the 'ship of the dead' (*maeta ni froan*). Additional water buffalo are given or pledged by the wife-takers, and in the final rite of the *maeta*, 'to dispatch the water buffalo horn' (*toil arabau diun*), the symbolic vessel is launched on its voyage to the sea where the spirits of the long dead reside. Ritual speech at this juncture is in the form of a stylized farewell to the dead who:

Du la ni era	Descend to the water
Du la ni taisa	Descend to the sea
Kika oid hui	For the ears to be wild
Ahe oid selu.	For the faces to be changed.
Im ba ten aim	You do not recognize us
Aim ba ten im	We do not recognize you

Im ba tad aim	You do not know us
Aim ba tad im	We do not know you
Im selu -la tilu- selu- o!	You are changed - go play- changed - o!

At the end of the oration two men carry the bier out into the bush. Without further ceremony they cast it away, scattering its cargo of horns. The dead are gone. The *maeta* is over.

Perhaps the most striking feature of black ritual is the persistent attention devoted to the idea of corporeal disintegration. From burial to the last rites, the dissolution of the body enshadows the ritual death process. The central conceit of the *maeta* ceremony is that the ancestors are but newly dead, that the marital contracts are being fulfilled at the very moment of decease.

In situating mortuary obligations between the mock burial of the body and the departure of the spirit, ritual joins social purpose to symbolic form. Rather than exhuming the dry bones of the dead and using such skeletal icons of agnation as the pivot of ritual, the Mambai focus on the perishable substance of life and the temporal ties it engenders. The *maeta* rests on an openly acknowledged hoax, but a hoax which serves as a powerful reminder of the nature of alliance. By lingering solemnly over decay and putrescence, ritual projects the theme of necessary renewal into representations of death.

Mambai thought postulates a dynamic tension between life, fertility, vitality on the one hand, and death, decay, depletion on the other. These two processes are conceived as complementary rather than antagonistic, and they converge in representations of the corpse. The icon of the perishable human body, poetically described as a 'rotten urn // decayed vessel' (*uisa broe // bia dome*), evokes its complement in two ways: negatively, in the omnipresent theme of fertility spent and exhausted; positively, in the equally insistent promises of life and fertility to come, promises which oratorically dominate the mock burial service.

This duality of the corpse is intimately associated with conceptions of affinity. The decaying yet "life-promising" corpse is a mirror image of marital connections which bring life even as they promise death. There is a perfect symmetry. Death foreshadows life as life foreshadows death, and the alternating rhythms of affinal alliance are metaphorically expressed in the inverse rhythms of the ritual disposal of corpses.

Opposed to the decaying body stands the spirit, materially represented in the imagery of hard, lasting horns of sacrificial buffalo, death ritual's distinctive icon of agnation. Unlike the body, the spirit escapes dissolu-

tion and passes on to a new form of existence, and the deathlessness of spirit in the other world replicates the sempiternity of agnatic ties in this world. Nor is the association of spirit with agnation solely metaphorical. In Mambai doctrine, the spirits of the long dead will eventually 'turn around again // turn about again' (*maklili hail // takali hail*), and return from the sea to be reborn as the children of their lineal descendants, hence actively perpetuating their own lines.

A full discussion of spirit rebirth and its association with naming practices would take us beyond the bounds of this paper and into white ritual. Here, I want only to emphasize the analogically constituted metaphysic expressed in social and symbolic dualism. At one pole of the analogy, a fluctuating continuity of life is achieved through cyclic processes of waxing and waning. The old must perish to be superseded by the new, the marriages of the young following those of the dead as fertility follows decay. Affinal alliance takes on the fate of the body and represents a form of social mortality. At the other pole, continuity is premised upon endless duration. Agnatic ties endure despite successive cleavages of male lines; the spirits of the dead wander away, but persist, until lineal ancestors become lineal descendants. In agnation, as in spirit, Mambai perceive a form of social immortality.

Ritual articulates the necessary interdependence of these two poles, decreeing that the very permanence of spirit can only be achieved through the medium of the body. Before spirits can pass away, the sufferings of the body must be compensated. For this, agnates require the assistance of their affines, those persons connected to them by ties of blood and flesh.

The interwoven fates of body and spirit dramatically and urgently communicate the fundamental premises of social exchange. These are, as Hertz realized (1907), deep metaphors, and give the most direct access to the ideas governing death practices. What the last rites make explicit is the essential constitution of the social order, wherein an immortal but sterile form of existence can only endure if it is complemented by one which is mortal but fertile.

V. The Body and the Earth: Death as Cosmological Exchange

In the mortuary code, the analogy, body : spirit :: alliance : agnation, articulates the structure of social time. Alliance is condemned to a regime of perpetual alternation which permits agnation to attain a form of perpetuity. The analogy explicates the ritual emphasis on an absent corpse. As the master metaphor of affinal alliance, the body hovers over

the marital contract, and can only be laid to rest with the contract itself. Indeed, the body plays a role similar to that of Mauss's *hau*, lingering on as an invisible sign of abiding obligations.

Ritual rhetoric thrusts the body onto the scene, a haunting, tropic figure come to witness the events it has set in motion. Thus Mambai describe mortuary prestations in idioms of restitution: the living gather together to repay the dead for the destruction of their bodies. Yet this very statement of ritual purpose evokes darker ideas of death and life, decay and fertility, sacrifice and restitution, ideas of a cosmological significance. And if death gifts are said to 'pay for the fatigue of the dead', Mambai also characterize the entire ritual undertaking as a black service intended to 'pay for the fatigue of the earth' (*seul raia ni kolen*).

A perusal of ritual acts and language elicits a powerful metaphor. The dead, the old ones who suffered to give life, evoke the cosmic figure of the Earth Mother. They are described in the very imagery reserved for the goddess, imagery of blackness, darkness, and decay, and their relationship to the living resembles that of the Earth Mother to all humanity. The dead gave of their own substance to nurture their children, while the Earth Mother who supports all life is no stranger to suffering and sacrifice. In mythic times, she too died and underwent the process of decay which fertilized her first child, the soil, and she endures the trials of nurturance which, year after year, culminate in the barrenness of the dry season. These cosmic ordeals resonate through the rituals of death, producing a chiming equivalence between the suffering ancestors and the suffering, divine life-giver.

The matter does not rest with metaphor. Even as the dead evoke the Earth Mother through resemblance, ritual takes the resemblance and projects it into the plane of contiguity. Then the body itself becomes a counter-gift, a dank and grim prestation to the Mother who gave it life, and who now receives its wasted remnants as her reward. This silent exchange is poetically described in idioms of consumption, equating flesh with food, burial with swallowing, and revealing the nurturing divinity in her darker aspect as mistress and devourer of corpses.

Amidst the pageantry of performance, ritual quietly marks the fulfillment of a more primeval obligation, an obligation to die incumbent on all women and all men. With its shifting metaphors, death ritual proclaims that Mambai existence is ordered by a contract older and stronger than the particular contracts forged in the exchange of women. The final price of life is not buffalo or pigs or any other such gift item. The price of life is death. The symmetry between marriage and burial unfolds

on the cosmic plane where the potency of the corpse is released within a cycle of fertility, decay, and renewal.

Thus the human body is implicated in two sets of obligations, and their concerted influence draws it into mortuary. On the social plane, it is the icon around which affinal obligations crystallize, the token of relatedness between agnatic groups. On the cosmic plane, it is the vehicle through which other obligations are discharged, the token of relatedness to the divine parent.

There is a sense, however, in which the analytic distinction of planes is artificial and distorts the Mambai reality. To the Mambai, society and cosmos do not simply refract each other, but are inextricably interlocked. The dove-tailing of obligations in ritual expresses a deep conviction that society is allied with the cosmos. Within this alliance, the life-giving flow of women in marriage and the life-restoring flow of corpses in death form a single exchange transaction.

Conclusion

... in fact it is this interaction which must explain the dual division; for men divide themselves into two groups in order that they may impart life to one another, that they may intermarry, compete with one another, and do to one another whatever is required by their theory of prosperity.

A. M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*

In the introduction to *The Gift*, Mauss identified the sheer diversity of exchange items as one of the defining characteristics of "total prestation". The circulation of things takes place side by side with the circulation of "courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances and feasts" (1954: 3). The inclusion of women in this list became the inspiration for alliance theory as developed in the works of Lévi-Strauss, Needham, Leach and others. Lévi-Strauss, however, introduced a note of hierarchy into the concept of total exchange. In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* he identifies women as the "supreme gift" (65) and matrimonial exchange as the "supreme rule of the gift" (481), the primary instrument of alliance.

Lévi-Strauss's intention was to reduce the apparent diversity of "rules of kinship and marriage ... to a small number", specifically, to the three rules and two forms of exchange which are the basis for the "three possible elementary kinship structures" (493). The emphasis on determining the underlying forms of marriage rules is congruent with the major theme of the book, that the incest prohibition and the law of

exogamy are the negative and positive aspects of a single, fundamental rule underlying the very existence of society.

In this grand vision, the rule of marriage has such profound implications that it is, by definition, a total phenomenon, the "archetype of all other manifestations based upon reciprocity" (481). The diverse forms of co-operation so characteristic of affinal relations have a secondary character and merely echo the original marital transaction. The co-operation in labor, the hospitality, the feasts and dances, the various ritual acts of "mutual ministration", as Hocart called them (1936; Needham's new edition 1970), are roughly equivalent and derivative expressions of the reciprocity which marriage rules institutionalize.

In this paper, I have approached the Mambai alliance system from a different angle, focusing not on the rule which determines marriage possibilities and impossibilities, but on the ritual obligations which extend maritally contracted affiliations into social space and time. Alliance in Mambai society is based on more than the rule-governed circulation of women. It is constructed out of the total complex of ritual responsibilities entailed by marriage.

We are dealing, indeed, with total prestation, but the ritual function of affines rather than the fact of affinity is the key to the system. The hierarchy in Lévi-Strauss's argument must be reversed, for solidarity in ritual is here an instrument, not a product, of alliance. Ritual exchange does not merely reiterate the social significance of marriage exchange. Rather, marriage exchange assumes social significance because it defines categories of ritual participants. Marriage is embedded in a round of ceremonial activities, and it is from these activities that it derives its cultural meaning and its organizational power.

The particular ritual task allotted to affines is the black disposal of the dead. To the Mambai, this allotment is part of the order of things, and viewed from within their system of representations, it is in no way arbitrary. Mortuary practices regulate the renewal of a perishable, female creativity which, according to cultural convention, is the very essence of marital affiliations. Thus the circulation of women implies a notion of temporality, expressed in terms of a cyclic alternation between life and death, between fertility and decay, between marital payments and mortuary payments. Alliance is engendered in this regime of changes where to give a woman is to relinquish a portion of one's own life, and each transmission is a courting of death. At one end of the alliance stands the woman, genitor of new life. At the other, already anticipated in the initial exchange, waits the corpse, the emptied, decaying vessel. In

between is the passage of time, and the ritual contract which governs it.

The Mambai know how to wait, how to live on credit. Indeed, the somber theme of all their ritual activities is that life and well-being are *only* given on credit and are to be paid for, at last, with death. If the Earth Mother can bide her time, awaiting her black festivals, her human children take the lesson to heart and apply it in their own affairs. And so we find them pledged to the deity and to one another, bound by their promises of ritual co-operation.

One might express the interdependence of affines this way: without affines, how would Mambai dispose of their dead? Lévi-Strauss quotes an analogous remark, elicited from Mead's Arapesh informants in a rather grudging explanation of the incest prohibition (1969: 484-5). The idea the bemused Arapesh conveyed was that one gave away one's sisters in order to secure brothers-in-law to assist in the hunt, gardening, etc., thus identifying marriage exchange as the means and solidarity as the end. Mambai mortuary rituals, however, belong to a different order of necessity than the Arapesh practice. According to Mambai mythology, the forms of black ritual are older than marriage institutions, originating in a period known as the 'depths of night' (*hoda-lalan*) before there were wife-givers and wife-takers, a time when 'female blood and male blood had not yet been divided' (*lar-hinan nor lar-manen ba ket ro hei*). Once the mythical blood division had been imposed, the new categories of affinal relatives simply assumed the pre-existent ritual duties.

I do not mean to treat myth as history, and besides, the mythological situation is complicated. There exists another narrative which attributes the invention of black ritual to the elaborate ruse an ancestor hero perpetrated on his affines, feigning death and summoning them to perform his own mortuary ceremony. I have discussed the relation between the two narratives elsewhere (Traube 1977), but a single point is relevant here. Whether affines inherit an ancient ritual service or are tricked into inventing it, mythology persistently highlights their mortuary duties.

What Mambai seem to be saying is that the only way to create an alliance out of marital affiliations is to involve the participants in some ritual activity. This power of ritual to create communities of performers is a theme of Mambai thought and a fact of their social life. If space permitted, I could provide various illustrations, but let it suffice to recall the scattering of agnatic descent lines and the white ritual duties which reunite them in a community of worship.

A final comparative remark is appropriate. Mambai ritual life bears a family resemblance to that of other eastern Indonesian societies.

Amongst the features which recur throughout the area are: elaboration of mortuary ceremonial, death duties of affines, assimilation of marital to mortuary payments, and more generally, an intense concern with the supervision of creative processes, and a salient homology between agricultural and human life expressed through a chiasmus of botanic and procreative idioms.

In the anthropological literature, eastern Indonesia is known for its variations on the theme of marriage alliance, manifested in systems of what the Dutch called "connubium". Although still in an early stage, efforts are underway to plot the range of social and symbolic variation in patterns of alliance (Fox forthcoming). What the present paper suggests is that, in at least one Indonesian society, the alliance pattern is designed by the ritual system. The primary purpose of Mambai ritual is the reproduction of both society and cosmos, the regeneration of life. Descent and alliance are its complementary techniques.

Wesleyan University, August, 1978.

NOTES

- ¹ The present paper is part of a series of works examining death in Mambai social life and collective representations.

The research on which this paper is based was supported by a grant (BNS72-05459) from the National Science Foundation and by a National Institute of Health Fellowship. I would like to thank Dr. Josué Harari, Dr. James J. Fox, and Dr. Richard Huntington for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

- ² Inevitably, an analysis confined to death ritual gives only a partial picture of Mambai ritual, for much of the meaning of either form derives from its relation to the other. See Traube 1977 and forthcoming.

- ³ There are, of course, certain obvious Hertzian overtones to the present analysis owing to the nature of the data considered. Like the essay on the right hand, this paper deals with dual symbolic classification. Within Hertz's schema, it might be said to focus on the "negative pole of the spiritual universe" (1973: 8) which Hertz associated with the left side of the lateral polarity. The 'black' pole of Mambai ritual activity connotes ideas of death, femininity, and the earth, and Hertz situated all of these at his sinister, left pole. If, as Mauss suggested (see Needham 1973: xii), Hertz's essay on religious polarity can also be read as a note to his investigation into "the dark side of humanity", there is a sense in which the present paper might fall within the bounds of such a study.

- ⁴ In a "provisional" general statement grounded in the literature on exchange, Sahlins (1972) emphasizes the role of "non-economic" or "exogenous" conditions in organizing primitive economies. Godelier (1975), arguing from a Marxist perspective, emphasizes the causal role of the economy. While re-

cognizing that non-economic relations may organize primitive economies, Godelier shifts the focus from exchange to production and posits a hierarchy of "institutional functions". He attributes a determinant role in social life and collective representations to that institution which, within a given social formation, functions as the system of relations of production. Godelier proposes a new field of investigation aimed at explicating the infrastructural causes which lead certain institutions to assume the function of relations of production and hence to dominate all other institutions.

Godelier faults the majority of anthropologists for circular reasoning which explains the "dominance" of an institution by its "multifunctional character", and multifunctional character by dominance. Mauss, however, did not assume a "hierarchy of institutions", the positivist error which Godelier decries. The "total phenomenon" involves "more than institutions, more even than systems of institutions divisible into legal, economic, religious and other parts", it is concerned "... with 'wholes', with systems in their entirety" (1954: 77).

Despite his intent, Godelier seems to return to a dissection of totalities. From society to society, in his view, identical functions are assigned to different institutional forms, but the forms themselves can be analytically isolated. Thus "kinship", "religious", "political" relations have discriminable natures and boundaries, and one may "regulate" another; what varies is their roles within total social formations. Maussian "total" analysis does not attribute fixed natures to social forms. Prestation has aspects which can be described as "religious", "economic", etc., but such aspects are not tags for types of social relations.

5 According to Lévi-Strauss, the tension between the categorical significance and personal value of women distinguishes the "matrimonial dialogue" from other systems of communication. In verbal language, he argues, the signifying function of words dominates their supposedly archaic nature as values to be treasured by particular groups or individuals. Of course, this triumph of signification does not apply to all forms of speaking. Take, for example, the case of magical language and words of power which may be cherished by their appointed owners. And then, there is the intriguing problem of silent discourse. Thus the Mambai make a distinction between unspoken words 'inside the stomach' and the elements of spoken discourse which 'leave the lips'. The former are withheld from communication. They constitute a veritable treasure, jealously guarded by individual owners, and transmitted only on the most solemn occasions.

6 In Needham's classification (1973), the Mambai system is one of "asymmetric prescriptive alliance", a type which corresponds approximately to Lévi-Strauss's category of "indirect exchange". Throughout this paper, "prescription" is defined according to Needham's criteria and refers to the structure of the relationship terminology. As Needham has repeatedly emphasized, a categorical prescription does not entail any particular form of social action; consequently, terminological analysis does not indicate the actual units or nature of affinal alliance.

In the Mambai system, actual marriages are contracted by minimal descent groups, the localized manifestations of agnatic houses. However, affinal alliances are formally maintained at a higher level grouping specified in terms of 'cult' (*lisa*) affiliations. The segments of a maximal house are associated with sets of ritual prohibitions and practices which comprise the cult. These cults are exogamous, and each one recognizes a set of permanent affinal relationships with other cults. There is no necessary agreement between the affinal relations of agnatically linked cult groups. In alliance contexts, Mambai

often use the terms 'cult' and 'house' interchangeably, but 'house' can operate at higher levels of inclusion.

- 7 Mambai distinguish a core of apical affines within the two categories of affinal relatives. Those to whom the founding ancestors of a group gave their sisters and daughters are called the 'paternal aunts from long ago' (*kai akin*). Those who first gave women to the ancestors are known as 'wife-givers of origin' (*umaen-fun*) or 'water-buffalo of the mother and water-buffalo of the father' (*arabau-inan nor arabau-aman*). In ritual discourse, such wife-taking/wife-giving pairs are described as 'sisters since the base of heaven // brothers since the edge of earth' (*tbo hoir lelo-fun // nara hoir rai-ehan*).
- 8 The eldest houses of different politico-ritual domains may claim agnatic relations to one another. They are not obliged to attend one another's white rituals, but the rites are performed in a set sequence based on the relations amongst the sacred springs belonging to the several houses. Mambai say that no matter how distant the relationship, members of agnatically linked houses are formally entitled to attend one another's rituals, and to receive the ceremonial portions due to the members of 'one house'.
- 9 The prohibited marriage with patrilocally related women is condemned as an infelicitous, dangerous recall of blood, a reversal of the proper flux of male and female blood. Mambai exhibit little concern with the closure of marital alliances or, to speak in the native idiom, with the eventual return of blood to its source.
- 10 Mats are also used to wrap corpses for burial.
- 11 First is the funeral, 'to bury the dead' (*taen maeta*). The elaborateness of the funeral depends on the age, sex, rank, and affinal connections of the deceased. Seven months later, a simpler memorial rite called the 'lifting of the dead' (*maeta ni hun*) is performed. Until the final mortuary ceremony the dead are said to play upon the peak and slopes of the sacred mountain where they 'watch over the pillar // look after the roof' of their houses of origin. It is possible to perform more than one mortuary for a single individual, provided that his or her buffalo horn is not 'sent away' to the sea, as described below in the text.
- 12 Occasionally, a *maeta* is sponsored by men from different houses who share an affinal link, such as the husbands or the sons of sisters. The core group of sponsors commands the support of other houses related through agnatic ancestry and sacra. Representatives of these houses attend to 'support and lift', i.e. to assist in the ceremony.
- 13 These men are also called *saun-ubun* which, translated literally, means 'masters of things'. Unfortunately, this gloss set in my mind during field research, and I ignored the implications of the title's primary referent, the class of flying insects, including mosquitos, flies and other blood-suckers attracted by the stench of death. I suspect that the designation *saun-ubun* is intended to associate the feast givers with the creatures which feed off of decayed matter. If so, the metaphor is an important one and harmonizes with the major chords of mortuary.
- 14 Slow, wasting diseases are one index of the ancestors' displeasure. If a man's children grow thin and pale, he knows that an ancestor wishes him to hold a *maeta*. Another sign is when wild pigs and deer ravage the gardens, for the dead assume these animal forms if they are left too long unattended.
- 15 The neighboring Kemak, for instance, combine a matrilineal prescription and four-partner marriage cycles (Clamagirand forthcoming). The Mambai, whose system resembles that of the Kemak in many other respects, neither practice nor value "marriage in a circle".

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