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SO MY NAME SHALL LIVE: STONE-DRAGGING AND GRAVE- BUILDING IN KODI, WEST SUMBA

In many different parts of Indonesia, people have built large and impressive graves for the dead, and have marked their burial with elaborate rituals and lavish distributions of food. The flamboyance of Balinese cremations, Toraja cave burials, Batak sarcophagi and Borneo mausoleums are by now familiar to wider audiences. The explicit links between the splendor of the funeral ceremonies and the social status of the deceased are also clear. In this paper, I shall discuss how the grave-building ceremonies of Kodi, West Sumba, have added an interesting twist to this familiar pattern of ostentatious celebrations of death: in West Sumba, prominent men do not need to rely on the willingness of their relatives to construct large graves for them after their deaths. They can instead sponsor stone-dragging ceremonies themselves. In this way, several years or even decades before their death they may assure themselves of a prestigious grave and the enduring renown of a great feast giver.

The living tradition of megalithic grave-building that we find on Sumba challenges two familiar assumptions about grave-building which are frequent in anthropological writings. The first concerns the chronological sequence of death and tomb-building, and the "rites of passage" interpretation of funerary symbolism which has been current since Hertz and Van Gennep. By detailing specific Kodi ideas about the construction of the tomb and the journey of the soul, we can come to understand the particular terms of their own cultural eschatology. The second concerns the political significance of such mortuary edifices, and their role in the demonstration and legitimation of social-religious leadership. Here, the

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speculative articles by archeologists and others who have studied “me-galithic cultures” will be compared with contrasting interpretations of tomb-building among people who are linguistically and culturally related to the Sumbanese – the Berawan of Borneo (Metcalf 1981, 1982) and the Merina of Madagascar (Bloch 1971, 1981). The key problem concerns the extent to which such edifices serve to index the power of specific individuals or suppress this individuality through the identification of the leaders as the temporary incarnations of an eternal order.

I begin this investigation with the ritual forms taken by stone-dragging and tomb-building in Kodi, outlining the symbolic stages of the stone’s journey. I then present a series of case studies illustrating the ways a person’s prestige may be enhanced or attacked at such ceremonies. An exploration of the cultural values of renown (*kandaba ngara*) and personal honor (*meke*) follows, showing the ways in which tomb-building is discussed and evaluated in Kodi terms. Through a fuller look at the considerations which are at stake in the pursuit of *rato*hood, I deal with both the ritual means available for seeking social prominence, and the individual motivations which drive men to do so.

The Symbolism of Kodi Gravestones

The large megalithic stone graves in the center of each ancestral village provide the most enduring and impressive symbols of individual importance and renown. They represent both the height of personal achievement and the ability to summon a vast amount of communal labor. Each of these huge boulders, some up to eighteen feet in breadth, had to be dragged a distance of five to eleven kilometers by a human force of several hundred to several thousand, then consecrated with a buffalo feast of 6-10 head. Additional mortuary feasts must also be held whenever bones are dug up and transferred to new locations, and whenever new bodies are added to the family grave. The high social cost of gravestone construction, and its preeminence in reckoning which men have earned the traditional title of *rato*, make it the clearest index of personal prestige and the enduring power of a single name.

Most stones used in Kodi ceremonial are drawn from a large chalk quarry in the river valley of Balaghar, a region separated from most of the ancestral villages by the rather treacherous waters of the bay at Wungo. Stones from this quarry, prized for their brilliant whiteness and shine, are used to construct most of the tombs in Bangedo, but in recent years the availability of Chinese trucks for hire in the town has moved some innovators to seek more exotic black stones from the southern coast or the northern limestone quarries. Whatever the materials used, the prime social rule concerning how the stone is brought to the grave is that it must be done ostentatiously, involving large numbers of people as

witnesses and participants, and that it must then be ceremonially consecrated.

The symbolic stages of the stone's journey remain the same, whatever the means of transport. The stone begins as a young bride, praised for her beauty and fine chalk-white skin, but as it continues on its way across the estuary and up to the ancestral villages, it is transformed into a representation of the dead soul, and finally a victorious warrior. The keys to this transformation are found in the ways of addressing the stone, and the metaphoric couplets which describe its passage.

The quarry most often used belongs to the clans of Kaha Malagho and Kaha Katoda, who have the ritual tasks of making the first fruit offerings after the harvest and performing headhunting ceremonies. The shining white boulders cut there are referred to as the "lovely daughters of Kaha Malagho and Kaha Katoda", whose hand in marriage is sought by suitors from far away. The purchase of a gravestone is negotiated in a rite which self-consciously parallels a human wedding. Those seeking the stone arrive with five horses and five buffalo (or at least a "down payment" of three or four, and the promise that more will follow), and their gifts are reciprocated with a payment in pigs and cloth. As in a marriage negotiation, the two sides involved must be represented by ritual spokesmen (*tou paneghe*), who are paid for their help with betel nut and cloth. The task of cutting the stone out of the quarry is borne by the owners (metaphorically, "the parents of the bride"), who prepare her for her transfer to a new home by giving her stone flesh a new form and dressing her regally with a large textile banner on top.

The stone as a young bride is addressed with female names which are ritually standardized – usually *Wanda watu hondi*, *Pyeda lade loro*, or "Wanda the grave stone, Pyeda of the shallow surf". Singers stand on top of the stone and evoke the intense longings of a young man for his sweetheart, personified by the stone, who is urged to travel to meet him in the ancestral village:

I cry for you, cross-cousin/sweetheart, so come on over here.

I remember when we first met,

Underneath the coconut tree at a full moon;

So move on, over here, over here to the wide village,

Where we can be reunited under the full moon.

I cry for you cross-cousin/sweetheart, cry from the depths of my eyes.

So come over here, cross-cousin/sweetheart, as I call to you!

The romantic tenor of these songs borrows the familiar idiom of courtship to persuade the young men to make a show of their prowess in pulling the stone before an audience of women and girls.

The stone purchasers designate a single man to serve as the one who builds the gravestone (the *tukango*). Usually an affine, he serves as the go-between at the negotiations for purchase, and is then charged with

overseeing the construction of the coconut trunk platform or “ship” (*tena*) on which the stone is loaded to be dragged to its destination. This “ship” consists of two trunks lashed together in a bowed “v” (strongly resembling the hull of a canoe, but open at one end), with a surface of banana leaves on which the boulder itself can be slipped when it is moved from the quarry. It is rolled forward on a series of smaller trunks and branches, collected by children and constantly moved to the front of the stone as it advances. As it is first moved onto the ship-platform, a great cry rises from among the spectators, and the textile banner is raised above the boulder as its “sail” (*lera*). At the time that the banner is raised, the symbolic identification of the stone with a bride is shifted to its next role as the ship carrying the dead soul.

The journey of the soul, as it is represented in mythological accounts and funeral chants, involves a lengthy peregrination along the coast, with various stopping-places along the way. Each clan or even lineage may have certain places where its dead souls will tend to congregate for a short time, “waiting for friends” to come to join them. During the first part of this journey, therefore, the stress is on a certain conviviality and companionship among kinsmen, who will later undertake the more treacherous crossing over water into the land of the dead. Although the Kodi people themselves are not seafaring, they represent the journey of the dead soul as a journey over the sea by analogy with the original journey undertaken by their ancestors when they first came to the island.

In addition to the ritual office of the stone-maker, there are several other men and women designated to “hold the rudder” (*pa ulekongo*) and guide the passage of the stone across the land and water. They stand below the colorful banner, singing songs of encouragement to entertain the workers and increase their spirit. Composed in parallel couplets, these *bengyo* (“effort songs”) reflect upon incidents in the singer’s personal or clan history which refer obliquely to the situation at hand. Thus, an old woman who feared that her brother’s gravestone might not arrive safely at his ancestral village sang of the illness and threatened death of a child. “Do not let in the fevers and the glazed eyes, do not ruffle the feathers like the sick chicken”, she sang to the stone, trying to persuade those pulling it to do their job conscientiously.

Because of the tremendous material and prestige investment in stone-dragging, much of the rhetorical force of the songs is focused on averting attacks on the authority of the stone’s owner. “Do not be like the horse that gets away, running away with my words”, some singers insist, “do not be like the dog that roams astray, barking at my speech. Be instead like the buffalo who follows obediently at the pull, the horse who conforms readily to the pressure at the neck.” Compliance with the group effort and a sort of “team spirit” are the professed goals of this stage of a successful stone-dragging.

Once the stone has been dragged the one kilometer down from the

quarry to the estuary at Wungo, it must be prepared to cross the often dangerous waters of the bay. Rights to the waters are controlled by the clan of Pakare, which stands in an affinal relationship to the sea according to mythological traditions which describe the marriage of one of its women to a crocodile. The oldest man in the lineage house founded by the crocodile's bride is given the title of Lord of the Bay (*Mori Menanga*), and he must receive a small payment in gold or livestock before the gravestone is allowed to cross. Once this is publicly presented, he gives his assent in the form of a brief blessing to the stone, and the platform is allowed to drift into the pounding surf.

It is here that the whole enterprise is most endangered: powerful waves could threaten to carry the stone out to sea, and the men holding onto it by long vine ropes could (if they harbored any resentment against the sponsor of the rite) choose this moment to let loose and allow it to escape. This had, in fact, happened at a major stone-dragging rite held by Ranga Bondi in 1970, when a huge boulder (over eight meters long) was washed away. It took ten years for its owner to reassemble the material sources needed to drag two separate stones in compensation for the one which was lost. The second stone was described as an umbrella which provided "shelter" for its predecessor (in Kodi couplets, the *kada ngindi lyodo, paluri tipu ura*, or "block for the sun's rays, shelter from the rains"), and kept it safe from the dangerous exposure to the elements which occurred during the long period that it was tossed on the waves and sand.

As it crosses the bay, the stone is clearly identified with the dead soul which travels across another body of water in its journey to the after-world. Although Kodi notions of the specific topography of the land of the dead are rather vague, we can nevertheless identify certain common elements: the idea of payment (usually in gold) to the Charon-like mythological figure who guards the gateway to the realm of the dead, the feeling that danger and disease will lurk inside the village for as long as the body remains unburied, and the celebration of the triumphant arrival of the dead soul to the accompaniment of gong-beating and feasting as the full mortuary feast gets underway.

Since the future occupant of the stone grave is often still alive at the time of the stone-dragging, the crossing anticipates the journey that his own soul will make, and – like the swarming of the seaworms in February, whose abundance is said to anticipate the harvest – serves not so much to predict the course of the latter event as to *depict* it symbolically, so it is experienced first in ritual and only later in fact. A man who has not been able to guide his stone to its final resting place in the ancestral village is said to be likely to encounter equally large difficulties in finding rest for his soul after death.

The sequence of stone-dragging rites on Kodi challenges the usual anthropological model of rites of passage as typified by a tripartite

division into a segregation, transitional period (in Turner's term, a "liminal stage") and then reaggregation (Van Gennep 1960, Turner 1967). While some stages seem to follow this outline, others slip uneasily out of its confines. The purchase of the stone mimes the separation of a daughter from her parent, the journey over the sea represents a liminal, dangerous transition, and the later transformation into a victorious warrior is a kind of reaggregation. But two factors complicate this sequence: the first is that it all occurs well *before* the death of the person concerned, so that the ritual transitions are only anticipations of real ones. The welcoming of the tombstone into the village graveyard may come many years before the soul of its occupant is officially welcomed into the community of the ancestors. The second is that the stone, once lost, can be "brought back to life" through the performance of the proper ceremonies and the utterance of appropriate words. Ritual errors can be corrected after the fact, and the safe passage of the soul into the afterworld can be assured by another ceremony.

As Tambiah has noted, the mechanical application of Van Gennep's scheme can distort the actual sequence and mask certain perceptions: there are in fact many "rites of affliction which have internal recursive loops, and shifts in the media emphasized, and a combined pattern of progressions and reiterations, whose subtleties are not revealed by a prior commitment to the tripartite straitjacket" (Tambiah 1981: 140). The passage of the stone over water, while openly compared to the passage of the dead soul into the land of the dead, is also typified by a number of these "recursive loops" which modify its sequence.

In the rhetoric that is used in ritual contexts, stones that are lost, washed away or shattered before they reach their final destination are portrayed as ailing, but not deceased, relatives, and new rites can be held for them to ask for a cure.

A-anikya Pyeda lade loro	There is still Pyeda who crossed the seas,
Pa la dereni a huhu inya	Whom you weaned from her mother's breast,
Ola cena wei lyala	At the ship near Wei Lyala.
A-anikya Hyoli watu	
wanda	There is still Wanda of the stone grave,
Pa la heka la baba bapa	Whom you pulled from the father's lap,
Ola mbali wei nyapu	Beside the villages of Weinyapu.
Pa tomango hadu kataku	So that it came to the aching head
La tilu tana jala	At the edge of the land to spread nets.
Pa dukingo kalawaro ihi	So that the fevers entered the body
La mata wei myarada	At the source in the fields.
Doro nani a koko mono	They cut her throat but still
mate inja mate	she did not die.
Hundi nani a kelana mono	They speared her stomach but still
heda inja heda	she did not pass away.

Dikya tane baka tobo	
makahoru	This is why we lift up the tilted plate,
Dikya noto baka pare	
matanebo	This is why we gather up the fallen rice,
Tana no banikya la dari	
bapa	So she'll go back to the father creator,
Tana no banikya la wolo	
inya	So she'll go back to the mother weaver.

The stone, again pictured as a young girl who is separated from her parents at marriage, is seen as falling sick – but not dying – when attacked at the crossing, so that the rite can be held to try to save her life and bring her back to ancestral protection. At Rangga Bondi's stone-dragging, which I witnessed in 1980, the incantation of these words was held to “breathe new life” into the stone, and make it an appropriate candidate for a tomb in this new reincarnation.

Once the stone has successfully been dragged across the rather treacherous estuary and emerged on the other side, the leaders of the ceremony begin to perform vigorous victory dances, waving swords and spears as they stamp about rolling their eyes. Its symbolic identity has again changed. The dead soul, hesitating nervously on the waves as it passed through a liminal state, is now transformed into a brave warrior who was defeated the elements. The new strength and virility of the stone is necessary for it to make the harder, uphill journey to the ancestral villages, standing high up on the cliffs overlooking the sea. Thus, the singers renew their efforts, urging the participants on with songs of heroic battles and ancestral feats of daring. When the stone finally approaches the villages themselves, its arrival is greeted with the beating of drums and gongs. The triumphant “owners of the stone” (*mori wyatu*, members of the sponsoring lineage) dance in front of the spectators, laden with jewelry, brandishing heirloom weapons and wearing finely woven textiles which further emphasize their public achievement of wealth and social standing.

The arrival of the stone is celebrated with a feast to welcome it into the village and to provide meat as compensation for all the participants. After the dancing, small clumps of dried betel nut are arranged on a large mat and distributed to each household according to a fixed roll-call of clan and lineage affiliations. This distribution, called *linggyaro*, provides perhaps the clearest mapping of social relations of hierarchy and distance of any ritual event; the most distant clans in attendance are honored by being served first, then the more direct neighbors are served in order of the ritual priority of their specific tasks, and finally the different lineages in the village are also served in rank order. Opinions differ on the exact ranking of certain lineages, so the order chosen by the feast's sponsors may be controversial.

Once each participant has received betel nut, pigs are brought into the

central field for slaughter, then cattle and water buffalo. The first buffalo to be killed is dedicated to the ancestral spirits by smashing an egg on his forehead as invocations are recited. Each animal thereafter is dedicated to specific deities, so that their acceptance of the sacrifice can be “read” later in the liver augury. When the livers have been evaluated by ritual specialists, the meat itself is carved up and distributed. Since there are no fixed, or clearly fixed, criteria for meat shares, the moment of distribution presents a rather tension-filled forum for expressing current status relations.

Meat in Kodi, as in many other societies with similar feasting systems, is both a political medium and, at least in part, the substance of politics itself. As Volkman has noted in her description of Toraja funerals, “if the live animal was a convenient symbol of the person and his wealth, the slaughtered beast becomes a metaphor for the unequal division of status in society. Its various parts – head, liver, thighs, ribs – their size and shape, and the order in which they are distributed, are all fused with status-related meaning” (Volkman 1979:117). The kinds of status meanings which apply at Kodi meat distributions can be divided into two categories, which the Kodinese usually describe as meat given to affines and meat given to outsiders.

At funerals, the head of the slaughtered animal is always given to the lineage of the mother’s brother, or *lete oro mburu*, *binye oro loho* (the “steps that she came down, doorway that she came out of” – designating the mother’s origin village, seen as the source of life). At stone-dragging feasts, this convention is also often followed, although less because of any formal rule than for the enduring debt which is recognized as being owed to the wife-givers. Major shares must also always be given to the wife-takers (*nobo vinye*) who brought livestock contributions to the slaughter, and to government officials. All of these exchanges could be described as somewhat asymmetrical, involving a relation of interdependency, and they therefore fall into the category of “complementary exchanges”.

Other aspects of the meat distributions, however, involve individuals whose relations are symmetrical, and who can be perceived as rivals. These include the specific prominent individuals who receive extra shares at these distributions because of their accumulation of “meat debts” from previous feasts. The sponsor is required to acknowledge his earlier indebtedness by “replacing the meat” (*ndali kabiyo*) that he has received before, but he may often try to outdo his rivals in order to establish a symbolic ascendancy over them. He may also choose to honor certain persons disproportionately at a feast because he plans to seek their help (in raising brideprice or getting rights to land) at some later occasion. Such calculations are kept silent at the time of the original prestation, but few feast-sponsors will hesitate to remind those who have received meat from them of their obligations.

A large stone requires two or three thousand invitations to the ceremony each day, of which only about 1200 will be to able-bodied men who hold the vine ropes. Two or three days may pass before the stone reaches its destination, and each day three to five buffalo must be killed to feed the workers, with six to ten slaughtered for the final feast. The amount of meat distributed expresses the prestige and importance of the host in graphic and tangible form, as does the speed with which the stone travels and the enthusiasm of the singers and participants.

His more enduring monument, however, will be his tomb. The tomb-building begins immediately after the stone's arrival. The stone remains inside the village to be mounted on a four-sided chamber which will hold the body. The union of the large, upper leaf of the tomb (the boulder which was dragged from the quarry) and the lower burial chamber itself is described as a conjugal union (*mbola*). The top leaf is referred to as the male section (the *kamone*), and it is explicitly the part of the tomb that "the name rides along on". The lower female cavity is the *kawinye* (meaning "woman" or "widow"), and was traditionally formed by a smaller stone with an opening made for the corpse. Nowadays, it is more common to form a four-sided chamber of smaller slabs, stuck together with cement. The corpse is placed inside wrapped in fine textiles, with knees folded and bound under the chin in fetal position. Often, even if the sponsor of the rite is not yet dead, there are bones or bodies ready to be put into the cavity before him – deceased wives, infants or grandchildren who will wait for him in death. The most prominent persons may even bury slaves with them under the stone leaf, although usually in a separate chamber.

Most traditional stones bear some simple carvings of emblems of wealth: horses, bronze gongs, buffalo horns, even the high-peaked roofs of the lineage houses. Now it has become a common practice to carve on the owner's name and occasionally even his genealogy. In the 1970s, a few stones were erected with three-dimensional cement figures of a house, a man in full warrior dress, a crocodile totem, horses and buffalo, and, in one case, an elaborate scene from clan mythology. Representations of a tree altar, buffalo horns, and dancing-headaddresses are also common in other districts. Paint is sometimes applied as a modern innovation, and the extra dimension of relief figures is increasingly popular.

Changes in form and a certain novelty of presentation underline the continuing value of these gravestones as expressions of personal prestige and standing. The symbolic representations of the stone, however, remain constant, and the cycle of ceremonial observance – the stone-dragging, feast on arrival in the village, and later consecration feast – cannot be changed. The sequence of the stone's transformations from a young bride to a dead soul and to a brave warrior can be played with to some degree, because its various representations interpenetrate. In ana-

lyzing the full ceremony, however, it becomes obvious that the stone, like so much in Eastern Indonesian symbolic expression, is made to play a double role – both male and female, both dead and alive, in which the final synthesis of opposing elements conveys a sort of unity and power which commands respect.

Case Studies of the Politics of Stones

Because of the tremendous investment of time, labor and expense involved in sponsoring a stone-dragging, these ceremonies are times when the person of the sponsor is particularly vulnerable to attack, and his social standing is made to ride precariously along on the back of the boulder that is being pulled. Three case histories of stones dragged during the period of my research (taken from twenty-five such events in 1979-1981) show the tensions and factionalism which often surface on such occasions, and provide the background for a discussion of cultural notions underlying them. The “lord of the stone” creates, in effect, a massive lithic edifice which will contain not only his corpse but also his reputation.

The ancestral village of the former district head, Rangga Baki, sponsored a stone-dragging rite in 1981 for his namesake, Rangga Horo, who had been executed by the Japanese during the period of occupation thirty years earlier. For this prominent family, the accusation of cigarette theft which had prompted his execution and – especially – the fact that he died in a prison in the regency capital many miles away were particularly humiliating. The details of the three-day journey undertaken by his kinsmen to the capital to fetch his body were repeated with almost loving detail in a funeral dirge (*hoyo*) which was sung as preparations were made for the stone to make its own journey.

Although the death had occurred a generation before, the weight of dishonor which had been placed upon the family as a result produced exuberant displays of grief and mourning by all the women in the village once the bones were exhumed and moved into the lineage house. Ra Mbolu, the grandson of the deceased, danced in the central field with his wife, and his brother’s wife sang these words, presenting herself as the grieving mother:

O ana mete mbolu nggu	O my child with the quick black eyes,
Na heda heka heda	Whose death was like no other death,
Oro bandilo makanana	Because of the rifles which were fired
A ndara dawa mai manuhur	By the foreign invading horses.
O ana ha kawalla nggu	O my child who was born alone,
Na mate heka mate	Whose passing was like no other
	passing,
Oro pana pa kalukungo	Because of the arrow which flew out
A bangga mai mangandu	From the dogs who came to steal.
Tana rawini pombo watu hondi	Let us make for him a stone grave;

Tana woloni rou kalama hembo Let us build for him a leafy platform.
 Pa mandattu wandi kalena So make the hole a deep one;
 Pa mbelako wandi ghahubo So make the shroud a wide one.

The fact that he died outside his house, executed by strangers, put it into the category of bad death (*mate pa lakico*, or “death by sharpness”), meaning that the soul had to be called down from the sun and moon. The long sufferings and wanderings of the soul were subject to particular elaboration because this rite was held so many years after his death. An initial earth burial had been made in 1942, but throughout this period he was still unable to enter the gates of the clan village and rejoin his ancestors.

Mourning wails and dirges accompanied only the exhuming of the bones, however. Once the stone itself arrived at the village, it was greeted with a joyful celebration, more dancing and a feast which finally freed his descendants of further obligations. The disjunction between the actual sequence of events (Rangga Horo’s death, the long period of waiting for a tomb to be built and for his own soul to be recalled, and the arrival of the stone) and the ritual sequence is even more apparent in this example than in the others. In effect, the family was mourning an attack on its own social standing rather than a beloved kinsman, and the person who stood to receive the most social credit for the ceremony was Ra Mbolu, rather than the deceased. This case presents a clear instance of tombs being built for the living in order to redefine power relations for future generations.

The second case study is that of Rangga Bondi’s stone, already alluded to, which was washed away by the waves (perhaps, others say, because of resentful participants who decided to let it go). The 1980 stone-dragging that I witnessed was the third such ceremony that Rangga Bondi had sponsored: the first stone he had pulled been for his father, Haghu Radu, who died relatively young, and the second the unusually large one which had been lost. Unable to bring that mighty boulder across the tides, Rangga Bondi – never one to step down entirely – decided to pull separate smaller stones this time, and later to join them with a cement seal. His flamboyance and fondness for innovation won him both friends and enemies in the faction-torn arena of Kodi feasting. While acknowledged as a skillful ritual impressario, he was described as someone who had inflated his own image and overreached his appropriate position. In traditional couplets, this was presented as “the swelling of an empty chest, the beating of a hollow drum” – a notion strongly akin to the ideas of over-extension which Western writers have presented as the sin of *hubris*. The man who pushes too hard to make his own name great makes heavy demands on his affines and dependants, and ends up shaming his fellows and setting standards which cannot be maintained without disrupting the social order.

Rangga Bondi had a history of such activities. In the earlier 1960s, he

challenged the authority of the district head by presenting testimony which accused him of corruption. The government-appointed head was able to disprove the charges, and Rangka Bondi was sent to prison for bearing false witness. After his release, he staged an elaborate buffalo feast to restore his own honor (called *woleko pa lohongo tukilo*, or “feast to remove the wooden neck harness”) and arranged a marriage between his eldest son and the district head’s daughter to re-open exchange relations between them. Taking the horse name of *Ndara Marapu* (literally, “the horse of the ancestral deities”, although he preferred the gloss usually given by Christian Indonesians, *kuda setan* or “the devil’s mount”), he declared his intention to enter the feasting game seriously and try for the higher title of *rato*. After giving many feasts in both his garden hamlet and ancestral village, he became a prominent singer and leader, deflecting raids on his herds and other personal attacks. By tempering flamboyant self-promotion with generosity and a concern for fulfilling his obligations, he re-established himself as an honorable man who could continue his own pursuit of renown.

The third case concerns a more direct personal attack levied on an individual through his gravestone. Rehi Wei Lyoko was a well-known lineage head, not as wealthy as Rangka Bondi, but very proud of the ritual treasure which he guarded within his lineage house: an heirloom Chinese jar which carried the ceremonial name of “jar that can never be lifted” (*ngguhi nja pa dadango*), and which symbolized the power of governmental authority which had been passed down in his own line of descent. On the occasion of rebuilding the house, Rehi Wei Lyoko invited many guests and was heard to brag about the immense amount of gold which he believed was hidden inside the jar, given by the many persons who had come to seek blessings from it over the generations.

Just a few weeks later, the jar was stolen. Its owners said the thieves had defied the tenets of traditional religion, thus exposing themselves to the curse of an early death. The jar was found ten days later, smashed open on the sands of a nearby beach. When it had been re-glued but not yet fully consecrated, Rehi Wei Lyoko organized a stone-dragging for his own tombstone. His enemies, still active, waited until the stone had arrived on the other side of the bay and the workers had returned home for the night. Then, out of pure spite, they smashed it to pieces with their axes, destroying the stone just one night before it was due to arrive in the ancestral village.

Their crime was, of course, dealt with in ritual fashion again, and a new stone (this time carefully guarded and pulled in over a single day) was brought to replace it. A buffalo was killed to atone for the loss of the soul of the smashed stone, and a special invocation was uttered as its remains were brought into the village:

Eminikya Pyeda lade loro	Here comes Pyeda who crosses the surf,
Pa mbole lipi njara	Whose flanks were beaten like a horse.
Eminikya Wanda watu hondi	Here comes Wanda the gravestone,
Pa palu ngora bangga	Whose snout was struck like a dog's.
Ba langa inde mate	If she was so abused but did not die
Koba tou do panaka	It is because she had no human skull.
Ba langa inde heda	If she was so abused but did not vanish
Moho ihi tou do panaka	It is because she had no human skull.
Dikya pa hei wainja a li cala la	This is the reason for the sound of the
mbali binye	gongs beside the gates,
Dikya pa hei wainja a li byendu	This is the cause for the sound of the
la rou kawango	drums by the banyan leaves,
Tana ambu dukini la kalete	So that she will not have to go up to ride
witti wyulla	the feet of the moon,
Tana ambu tomani la kahonga	So that she will not travel astride
limya lodo	the hand of the sun.

These words pronounced over the shattered stone saved its soul from endless wandering through the sky, and showed its owner's determination to guard his own reputation. Only after a large feast has been held to consecrate the new stone and restore the honor and integrity of the broken urn will Rehi Wei Lyoko's honor be restored.

These case studies provide us with some initial notions about the goals of the sponsors of these feasts, and the social limitations which are placed on the expression of their ambitions. Sponsors and participants share notions of reputation, honor and renown which motivate their actions. Such wider cultural notions must be explored before we can understand the logic of these often apparently reckless battles for prestige.

Cultural Notions of Reputation

Most prestige feasts, but most clearly stone-dragging, are built around the attainment and negotiation of reputation. Reputation could be generally defined as the defense of a certain public image, but it incorporates two different aspects which operate very differently on the ritual stage. The first is honor (the Kodi term is *meke*), which refers to the maintenance of "face" through the satisfactory fulfillment of obligation. The second is renown (*ngara*) which focuses more determinedly on the seeking of a great name through ostentatious display. Although both are concerned with collective evaluation of proper conduct, the standards of honorable behavior are usually circumspect and conservative, while those of renown are extravagant and innovative in a more theatrical mode. Both concepts are linked to different types of exchange, which I have labeled (following Shore 1982 and Bateson 1958) as complementary and symmetrical.

Honor (*meke*) can be seen as the prime motivation in exchanges between persons whose relationship is described as *complementary*.

Such exchanges have as their prototype the affinal exchanges conducted at marriages, and can be characterized as formal and ceremonious, suggesting the qualities of ritual. Each time that they are repeated they serve to symbolize a pre-existing bond and reinforce the feelings of interdependency between the two partners.

Renown (*ngara*), on the other hand, is a concern in exchanges between individuals who are seen as standing in *symmetrical* relationship to each other. The prototype for this kind of relationship is the near identity of brothers, who share so many attributes that their destinies are presented as parallel rather than intertwined. Members of rival lineage houses and of rival clans may also perceive their relationship as symmetrical. When they do so, they will exchange with their symmetrical partner in order to define or create a bond which will have status repercussions. Such exchanges tend toward conflict and fission, and approach the qualities of games.

Ritual events involve a wide range of exchanges, some between persons in complementary relationships and others between those in symmetrical relationships. A single prestige feast will involve many contributions and distributions between affines, as well as a public slaughter sponsored by a competing group of brothers. A key difference in the way that they are handled, however, which allows us to separate them analytically, is that the "official count" of a ritual slaughter is always made in terms of symmetrical relations rather than complementary ones. Affinal contributions of live animals and affinal shares of killed meat are all socially recognized and evaluated, but the "prestige score" is made up of calculations of the number killed in the name of the sponsor and his lineage brothers.

The game-like aspect of exchange between co-sponsors or rivals contrasts strongly with the ritual aspect of exchanges with affines, who are shown great deference and respect in a public context. Since complementary relations imply a certain asymmetry and differentness, these exchanges are treated with an idiom of mutuality that disdains such calculations. Symmetrical relations, on the other hand, such as those between two brothers or two rival lineage heads, are pervaded by strict reckonings of each man's "cutting history" which carry heavy status implications. The principles of this difference are the same as the ones Shore proposed for exchange relations in Samoa:

"Whereas great pains are often taken in complementary exchanges to ensure quantitative equality between those perceived as qualitatively distinct, symmetrical exchanges encourage the maintenance of quantitative difference between antagonists perceived as qualitatively identical." (Shore 1982:206.)

Honor in its Sumbanese form is concerned mainly with avoiding situations which are embarrassing or shameful. Each person is assumed to have a certain social integrity which can be lost or threatened by in-

appropriate behavior but can be restored. Ritual means for restoring this sense of social integrity usually involve a new public recognition of obligation and making a ceremonial payment. The presentation of live-stock fines for adultery or theft is described as “returning the honor” (*habali a mekena*) of the person offended, and “covering their shame” with the cloth given in compensation.

As in many other Indonesian languages (most notably the Bugis concept of *siri*), both “honor” and “shame” are united in a single term which expresses a dangerous slipping away from appropriate social behavior. Kodi usage of the concept, however, differs from the Middle Eastern notion of “honor” as a sort of game between equals conducted according to a dialectic of challenge and riposte (Bourdieu 1966). The “rules” which define honorable conduct in Sumba do not depend on a previous recognition of equality (as in the notion of an “honorable adversary”) but rather on fulfilling certain obligations which are perceived as universally obligatory. Seekers of renown may goad their rivals into action by a ritual challenge; defenders of honor will disdain such activities as mere showmanship, and instead stress their own faithfulness to norms of re-distribution and sharing among kin.

Kodi “honor” is a quality held by individuals or social groups (usually descent lines) which is rooted in their fulfillment of material obligations rather than ceremonial roles. The “honor” of a lineage may be endangered, for instance, if they have made no efforts to rebuild their cult house in the ancestral village, which has fallen into a shambles. The corporate responsibility to carry out ritual functions is a public one, and hence different from the Balinese notion of shame as a sort of “stage fright”, the fear that one may fail to play one’s allotted role acceptably (Geertz 1973). If the Balinese see the world as a stage to be filled with proper attitudes and convincing enactments, the Kodi see instead a world bound by exchange paths and individuals’ manipulation of them. They would feel not so much “nervous” at being unable to play their roles properly as outraged if they saw someone else letting them down. While verbal eloquence and style are appreciated, the parameters of honorable behaviour are defined more by material support and kin solidarity than public demeanor.

Over the course of the life cycle, most individuals are bound by the public discourse of humility to present their concerns as primarily those of maintaining honor until they are well-established in the feasting system. They describe their participation as the fulfillment of obligation rather than the seeking of personal prominence. It is only once someone has accumulated enough resources and exchange “credits” to operate on the larger scale of high risks that he may admit a concern with renown, and agree to enter the “feasting game” on its own terms.

The path of renown is a dangerous one, however, because of the possibility that one may come to over-extend one’s resources and scrimp

on the basic obligations of honor (*meke*). The Kodinese speak of this as the temptation to “go too far”, over-reaching one’s bounds in the pursuit of fame. It is here that their concept comes close to the previously mentioned Greek notion of *hubris*. A man like Ranga Bondi, who is seen as pushing his own career at the expense of others, lays himself open to attack and sabotage. He fails to respect the limits established by tradition, and is so rigid and uncompromising in his striving for renown that he neglects crucial obligations for re-distribution. Rehi Wei Lyoko was also attacked for this sin, although in his case it seems that his flaunting of a ritually prominent descent line was at least as important as his feasting activities themselves.

The relation between honor and renown can be said to oscillate between two cultural extremes: honor defines the outer parameters of respectability, and keeps a check on the wilder expressions of a desire for renown. At the same time, the motivations which surface on the slaughter field have helped to energize the whole community over the past few months and push them to sponsor new performances where complementary, repetitive exchanges are also carried out. What appear to be feasts of individual self-aggrandizement may also have social functions of redistribution. It is necessary, therefore, for us to widen our analytic perspective at this point to consider the problem of how the construction of mortuary edifices relates to wider forms of political and social organization.

Tomb-Building and Power Relations

Archeologists who have studied the so-called “megalithic cultures” of Europe have linked the building of impressive mortuary edifices to colonization by “megalithic missionaries” from the state societies of the Mediterranean (Childe 1940), or to the increased social stratification of emerging chieftainships (Renfrew 1973a, 1973b). Renfrew has argued for a change from the early neolithic tombs of England and Scotland, emerging from the competitive leaders of a relatively egalitarian society, to the late neolithic “henge” structures which were the work of a centralized chief and professional priesthood. His model of early neolithic political organization is close to the Kodi case, but even very large stone graves in this society are built without the imposition of a coercive power or a hereditary aristocracy. The feasibility of constructing tombs as large as those of the late neolithic is demonstrated in a society where status is achieved as well as inherited, and they are constructed with the willing cooperation of the laborers. Accompanied by feasts and the redistribution of meat, such living megalithic traditions demonstrate that stone-dragging and grave-building are important parts of a prestige feasting complex where rank is usually a much more unstable quality.

Both Peacock (1962) and Kirsch (1973) have argued that the complex of ideas of honor and achievement I have discussed here are

associated with the functional needs of a shifting-cultivation based society. The feasts are given by individual households in a gradual series of increasing complexity and lavishness. Giving a feast yields new status to its sponsor, who then receives the right to certain symbols of his status – to wear a particular kind of sword, to erect a megalith. In the Kodi case, as in other Indonesian megalithic societies like Nias (Suzuki 1971), this achievement can also be recognized in the taking of a title or horse and dog name. The feasts therefore function to stimulate and reward crop production of each individual household, since the type of cultivation itself does not permit any household to slack off. By providing a public forum for the achievement of prestige as well as the redistribution of some of the fruits of the harvest, the values of feasting serve to reinforce the values of successful agricultural production and social control.

Beyond their role in stimulating shifting cultivation, however, such feasts also serve to define power relations for future generations. Peter Metcalf (in Huntington and Metcalf 1979) has argued that the Berawan of Borneo build huge wooden mausoleums as symbols of chiefly legitimization. Where categories of rank are somewhat flexible, interweaving factors of heredity with personal achievement, the construction of impressive mortuary edifices can establish claims to aristocratic rank. Just as the dragging and consecrating of gravestones in Sumba demonstrates one person's ability to marshal together both material resources and social support, the building of a mausoleum presents an enduring monument to one man's leadership.

Metcalf's account differs from the Kodi case in one important respect, however. While the ambitious individual in West Sumba can assure himself of a claim to *rato*hood by constructing his own tomb, this is not an appropriate cultural alternative in Borneo. But since the emergent leader can hardly wait to aggrandize himself until after he dies, he may build a large tomb anyway in the name of a recently deceased relative. By honoring his relative with a mausoleum, the leader ennobles himself and demonstrates the solidarity of the community behind him. Ceremonial prominence and leadership are established by the building of the tombs, not by the names that they carry.

The Kodi case appears somewhat paradoxical because prominent men may build large monuments to their own lives while they are still living. The Berawan case is paradoxical in the other sense: unable to honor themselves directly, Berawan leaders must demonstrate the community solidarity that they have achieved by building a monument to someone else's honor. Yet, in the final analysis, both still conform to the symbolic principle that an impressive grave serves to enlarge the image of its occupant and assure him a sort of social immortality:

“As the jungle creepers engulf and finally topple these structures, so their architects gradually fade from view. Monumentalization amplifies the equation that Hertz made between the fate of the

body and the fate of the soul. The corpse, by association with its container, is made enduring and larger than life in order that its owner's name may be the same" (Huntington and Metcalf 1979: 141).

It appears that the premise of many Indonesian rituals of grave-building is the establishment of social difference rather than the promotion of harmony. Instead of presenting ritual dramas where the forces which separate individuals are opposed and defeated, such ceremonies begin with a consolidated effort and end with an exercise in divisiveness. Men are not created equal in Sumba, but the differences between them are often obscured in ordinary social interactions. It could be argued that these ritual feasts and stone-draggings serve in part to show them exactly how different they are.

This view of ritual as a forum for social competition, and in particular of tomb-building as the most extreme expression of this competition, is sharply at odds with the interpretation of a similar complex of tomb construction and burial among the Merina of Madagascar, studied by Maurice Bloch (Bloch 1971, 1981). In an essay on 'Death, Women and Power', Bloch (1982) proposes that the logic of Merina funerals is grounded in an attack on the very values of individual status and renown which are most salient in Kodi. He then goes on to extend his interpretation to all societies which can be characterized as falling under the general type of traditional authority. His strongest statement of this argument leaves little doubt that it is intended to apply to Indonesian examples such as Sumba and Borneo as well as his Malagasy materials:

"I would suggest, therefore, that in all societies where authority is linked to an ideal, unchanging order, the funerary rituals have in one way or another to overcome the individuality of a particular corpse, and in particular the fact of its individual death which also implies the fact of its individual birth. This is because both death and birth negate the notion of eternal unchangingness." (Bloch 1982:223-224.)

The Merina graves are huge, collective structures, to which bones are added at regular intervals. When new bones are added, they are mixed in indiscriminately with those of their ancestors, and, in Bloch's terms, the tombs become the medium for the merging of ancestors, descent groups and land. In the Kodi tombs, on the other hand, each prominent person must be buried in his own separate structure. Those buried with him may include wives, grandchildren and (occasionally) dependants, but each "name stone" is clearly identified with a single individual.

The distinction between individual and collective graves is crucial to the fact that while authority in Kodi is undoubtedly linked to the ideal order set by the ancestors, the strivings of individuals to monumentalize their own names in the form of megalithic tombs are in no way seen as antithetical to the social order: The logic of Kodi feasting requires its

participants to strive to outdo each other and affirm their victories through the construction of impressive tombs. By asserting that funerary rituals are always concerned with a “victory over individuality”, Bloch is imposing an overly limited conceptual strait-jacket upon many complex and varied notions of cultural eschatology. Kodi imagery associated with the dead soul’s journey maintains individual personality after death, and may even invest it with greater power. A named and titled ancestor “lives on” after his demise in many ways which, in Kodi terms, make him a more important social presence after death than before. The traditional authority of the dead feeds fierce prestige battles among the living to achieve the status of a named ancestor in the afterworld.

Bloch is also wrong in associating the maintenance of traditional authority as it is found all over Southeast Asia with notions of “eternal unchangingness”. As both Kirsch (1973) and Leach (1954) have pointed out, most mainland hill tribes and isolated island peoples have social systems which are too flexible to subscribe to permanent symbols that irrevocably fix status relations. Leach has noted that the Kachin use perishable materials such as bamboo altars or wooden posts to mark an individual’s rise in status, and the destruction of livestock in sacrifices means that each feast requires a new beginning. He contrasts this situation with that of the Naga, who do build stone megaliths – but many of these are reduced to a clutter of fallen stones once their architect has passed away. As Kirsch has observed:

“The stones erected to symbolize status advance among the Naga do not serve as a focus for any ‘ancestral’ (or other) cult. The ‘megalithic’ Naga are too concerned with erecting their *own* stones, to enhance their own status, to be bothered with honoring any past achievement. Although we might think of these stones as pathetic attempts to make permanent prestige and status relations, hill tribe society in general is too flexible and its time orientation too narrow to structure itself around any permanent symbols that irrevocably fix status relations.” (Kirsch 1973: 17.)

Kodi megaliths are similar in this respect to the Naga megaliths Kirsch describes. Although made of impressive and enduring materials, they may often fall into disrepair, and the porous stone usually begins to crumble after just a few generations. Used as platforms on which spectators may stand as they watch the sacrifices, or convenient surfaces for drying paddy and corn, they are not objects of any particular reverence. Only during the sea worm festivities, when pieces of fresh betel are scattered over them with a prayer to the ancestors, are they even explicitly addressed and honored. But the effort that went into building them “proves” that their sponsor has certain supposedly innate qualities of spiritual potency which qualify him for renown. The successful sponsorship of a stone-dragging and grave-building feast is seen as both a “test”

of one's honor (*meke*), the fulfillment of obligations, and a way to increase one's renown (*ngara*).

Bloch's view of funerals as attacks on individuality is rooted in an approach which sees "the individual" as part of the secular order, and the community of the ancestors as part of an elaborate mystification which is presented as the sacred. In fact, however, societies such as the Kodi (or, it would seem, the Naga and Kachin) do not separate secular acts and statuses from sacred ones as he would believe. Since the souls of the deceased retain in death the rank that they have attained in life, virtually every act that a person performs is directed simultaneously to improving his status in this world and in the next one. The Kodi leader who has built an impressive stone grave will arrive at the village of the dead to a chorus of dancing girls, gongs and drums beating, and magnificent feasts, while his dependants who are laid to rest beside him in simple earthen graves will enjoy an equally humble status in the afterworld. Since earthly status is determined by the participation in and sponsorship of large-scale feasts, status in the afterworld is marked by the same "inequality of souls".

There is no dissolution of individuality or of individual achievements in death, in graves or in the afterworld. Rather than being "mere caretakers of eternal positions", Kodi leaders retain their own character and style for as long as they remain in the memory of their descendants. At that time, their mighty stone monuments may have already started to crumble, and their names may have already become confused in the genealogical invocations of recent ancestors. They pass into the dust of time as half-remembered forefathers, recalled in an oblique couplet or by a now mossy rubble in the village square, but with personalities every bit as intact as their tombs.

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