

**HAVING YOUR HOUSE AND EATING IT:
HOUSES AND SIBLINGS IN ARA, SOUTH SULAWESI***

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Introduction: Alliance, Descent and the House

In this paper, I will argue that Lévi-Strauss's concept of the "house" cannot be applied in a straightforward way to the Indonesian societies recently characterized by Errington as "centrist" (Errington, 1989). Lévi-Strauss sees the "house" as a solution to the problems of societies where "political and economic interests" have not yet "overstepped the old ties of blood", in other words where class divisions must still be represented in a pre-class ideology of shared descent and alliance. Within Indonesia, on the other hand, we find houses playing a key symbolic role in a whole range of social forms, from self-sufficient, egalitarian "tribes", to maritime empires to oriental despotisms. Societies at all these levels make use of the house as a symbolic device to represent social groups. I argue that this is because an idiom of siblingship, linked to an idiom of shared place, is far more important in organizing social life than the idioms of alliance and descent.

In another sense, however, Lévi-Strauss's concept does have great relevance for some societies in Indonesia in which competition for wealth and power among the upper strata is intense but has not led to stable class divisions. These societies do make use of the house in a manner highly reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's European, Japanese and Kwakiutl examples. It is this dual nature of the 'problems' to which the house is a

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'solution' that makes the application of Lévi-Strauss's theory to feudal Indonesia so fascinating and so complex. Because of limitations of space, I will not be able to do justice to this second aspect of the problem. The rest of this paper will be devoted to demonstrating the fact that the house is solving a different problem in "centrist" Indonesia than in feudal Europe or Japan.

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For Lévi-Strauss, the paradigmatic kinship system is one based on the idioms of filiation and alliance. In his early writings on kinship, he argued that classless, segmentary societies (Durkheim's "mechanical solidarity") are integrated primarily through the exchange of women in marriage. Where "positive marriage rules" are in operation (elementary structures), marriage alliance serves as part of the enduring structure of the society. In kin-based societies where "negative marriage rules" alone are in operation, alliance may appear to generate only an "individuating web of complementary filiation" within each descent group, and descent alone may structure the "politico-jural domain". In societies based on both "alliance" and "descent", filiation is the key idiom around which social structure is articulated.

A second important feature of classless, segmentary societies for Lévi-Strauss is that, while they suffer historical change, they reject it ideologically. They prefer to relate the present to a changeless originary past through myth. Modern societies, by contrast, valorise change, and relate the present to an ever-changing past through historical narrative. The difference between "hot" and "cold" societies is not so much one between a dynamic and a static *present*, but between a mutable and an immutable *past*. "Hot" societies are based on an internal division into competing classes and interest groups

which generate change internally. While a certain degree of social integration is still produced through the exchange of women (“complex structures”), an increasing degree is achieved through the exchange of material goods. Lévi-Strauss has at times explicitly linked this contrast to that made by Durkheim between “mechanical” and “organic” solidarity. Lévi-Strauss introduced the concept of the “house” to help analyze societies he sees as making a transition from kin-based to class-based social orders. His definitions of “house-based societies” have been discussed in the introduction to this volume and need not be repeated here.

It is highly significant that where Lévi-Strauss does refer to Indonesia, he devotes very little space to the “bilateral” societies of the Philippines, Sulawesi, Borneo and Java. Unable to conceive of an alternative set of metaphors to those of filiation and alliance, Lévi-Strauss claims that:

in Borneo as in Java the conjugal couple constitutes the true kernel of the family, and, more generally, of the kindred. Moreover, this central role of alliance manifests itself in two ways: as a principle of unity, underpinning a type of social structure which, since last year, we have agreed to call the “house”, and as a principle of antagonism because, in the cases considered, each new alliance generates a tension between families on the subject of the residence - viri- or uxorilocal - of the new couple, and therefore of that of the two families which it is the couple's duty to perpetuate. (Lévi-Strauss, 1987: 155)

He then quickly passes on to a discussion of the Atoni of Timor and the Karo Batak of Sumatra, both of which are on the Indonesian periphery, and both of which operate more familiar unilineal systems with positive marriage rules. Errington has

recently argued that they are structured by a principle of dualism, while the societies of the Philippines, Java, Bali and Sulawesi are structured by a metaphor of center and periphery, or “centrism” (Errington, 1989: 208). Here I wish to argue that this spatial metaphor is everywhere rooted in the house as fundamental social unit, and articulated with the image of a set of coresident childhood siblings.

It has long been recognised that one of the consequences of “bilateral descent” is that genealogical “rules” do not unambiguously allocate individuals to discrete units which may then be linked by the exchange of women. All social relationships tend to be assimilated to kin relations, so that one is either a kinsmen or a stranger, with no room left over for “affines”. There is a tendency toward the endogamy of a localized group, and differences in origin between husband and wife are played down. The kin group tends to merge with the local group and with the in-marrying group. I would argue that Murdock’s notion of the deme as a localized, endogamous, bilateral descent group constitutes only a limit case for most of these societies: in-marriage and localization are only tendencies within these systems and in practice there has always been a great deal of movement and even long distance migration in these societies, as the distribution of the Malagasy and Easter Islanders attest.

This poses a set of symbolic problems quite foreign to societies organized in terms of exogamous unilineal descent groups, where concepts of place need not enter into the jural definition of corporate groupings (although residence may play a large role in practice). Shared place is of the essence to group identity of whatever scale in the “centrist systems” of Austronesia, and it is the house as both residence and architectural construct that tends to take on the central role as symbol of social groups, ranging in scale

from the nuclear family to the kingdom. A more problematic symbolic feature of these societies relates to incest. In a sense, a man always marries a kinswoman, and incest is always a matter of degree (cf. Conklin, 1964; Bloch, 1971). A recurrent ideological problem is how to open up a degree of difference between potential spouses sufficient to avoid the feeling of incest, without creating a permanent category of nonkinsmen. One solution is to stress sexual difference in the early years of courtship and marriage, but to see marriage itself a process in which there is a progressive transformation of affines into kin, or more narrowly, of spouses into siblings. This transformation can be effected through a “downward focus” on the offspring of a marriage through devices such as teknonymy (Geertz and Geertz, 1975), the relation between co-parents-in-law as stabilised through shared grandchildren (Carsten, this volume), or, as in the case in hand in the village of Ara, through a series of rituals designed to shift attention from the elder to the younger generation in a household, and to promote the image of the coresident sibling set as the central image of sociality (cf. McKinley, 1981; Boon, 1977).

Instead of dealing with a dialectic of descent and alliance between discrete social units, then, one is dealing with a dialectic of unity and division within a nested set of encompassing socio-spatial units. The concept of “bilateral descent” is highly misleading since it focusses attention on ties of filiation, when in fact the whole system is geared toward siblingship and shared place. It follows that the 'house' is 'solving' a different kind of problem in the symbolic systems of 'centrist Indonesia' than in the feudal systems discussed by Lévi-Strauss.

Ritual in Ara

In the remainder of this paper, I propose to follow the course of the ritual cycle in Ara, a Makassarese village in South Sulawesi, Indonesia.¹ The people of Ara seem to be engaged in a never-ending round of ritual activities, an impression which is due in part to the fact that in recent times a good deal of practical economic activity has been carried out away from the village by men on temporary labour migration to build boats on distant islands. Even the ones who have taken their families with them tend to return to Ara to conduct the major life-cycle rituals of circumcision, marriage and burial. A key element in almost all such rituals is the preparation and momentary display of elaborate offerings of food, notable for the careful attention paid to colour and composition. The main ingredients are ordinary rice, and glutinous rice which comes in black, red, yellow and white varieties. Rice may be displayed in cooked or raw form, along with meat and eggs, palm sugar, coconuts, bananas, benzoin incense, and the constituents of betel chews: tobacco, betel leaf, areca nut, gambir powder, and lime. Such displays are called *a'patala*, the word used to describe the laying of a table for a meal. In this paper, I will spare you the tedium of listing the ingredients for each and every ritual.

One magician explained to me that these offerings are intended as physical bodies in which the spirits can materialize, since they are composed of the same elements as human bodies. Thus the assembly of red, black and white rice and yellow curry represents the four elements of fire, earth, water and air, while the eggs placed on top of the mounds of rice represent the “eggs” found within the human body that are the loci of human spirit. The trays of coconuts and bananas which are often placed beside the rice offerings are likewise tied to the human body, in that they represent ribs and the breasts.

I never got direct confirmation of this interpretation from a female medium, although they listened to it with keen attention when I repeated it to them.

As a general rule, the female mediums emphasize material symbols, while male magicians emphasize linguistic incantations and exegesis. But as we shall see, even among the mediums, many of their ritual techniques are explicitly oriented to the embodiment and transfer of spiritual entities from one vessel to another. Ritual practice as a whole is a dialectic of container and contained, form and content, material symbol and linguistic incantation. This dialectic has been given a great deal of explicit theoretical discussion in the Sufi tradition, much of it going back to Greek neo-Platonic sources as filtered through Ibn al-Arabi and others. In the local Indonesian version of this tradition, the visible world is seen as but the seventh in a series of emanations from the Godhead. But it is a more general dialectic that has been addressed in many other intellectual traditions. Much of the rituals and doctrines discussed in this paper bear a remarkable similarity to those of more obviously Hindu-Buddhist derivation found in Java and Bali (cf. Headley, 1987).

In the next sections, I shall describe the rituals surrounding the creation of the human body and its associated soul, the creation of the house and its associated spirits and household members, and the creation of the village realm and its associated royal ancestors and deme members.

THE SELF

Marriage and the generation of vitality

I begin with the rituals surrounding marriage since they provide the most extreme statement of social difference in the cycle, a difference which is progressively covered

over and denied by subsequent rituals. The differences are of three kinds: kinship, gender and social rank. Due to lack of space, I shall have to leave the issue of social rank aside except for a few brief remarks at the end.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the logic of much of the symbolic system points toward marriage with a close kinsman. In myth, the typical form of incest is that between opposite sex twins who shared a womb and feel desire for one another because of the remembrance of a lost unity. In ritual, a brother-sister pair is systematically substituted for a husband-wife pair whenever images of solidarity or continuity are required. Since sibling marriage is prohibited by shariah law, the next best option is first cousin marriage.

The point is that marriage is regarded as being a tie established within the group, not between groups. Nevertheless, a certain difference must be established between a prospective bride and groom in the prelude to their wedding. They must practice avoidance after the formal betrothal, and differences between the hard, erect qualities of male bodies and the soft, encompassing qualities of female bodies, as well as a certain antagonism between them, are symbolically played up.

Before consummation, a mock combat is staged between the bride and groom, in which the separation that has hitherto been enforced between them is violently overcome by the groom. The bride wraps her head and body like a mummy in a cloth and hides in the attic. The groom has to penetrate this most private section of the house, seize her, carry her downstairs, uncover her face, and wash it with water. He then holds her tight while a rattan rope is passed around them. The final public ritual involves them mutually feeding one another. The groom first makes a ball of cooked rice and attempts to place it

in the bride's mouth. Again she is supposed to struggle and refuse it out of shame. The bride then feeds the groom. The contest continues later in private, as the groom must correctly answer a series of riddles before being allowed to consummate the marriage. The sexual tension generated by these practices is great, and the end result of them is the overcoming of difference and the generation of new life.ⁱⁱ

On the third day after the wedding, women from the bride's family distribute sarongs she has woven to the male siblings and cousins of the groom's parents. Later the bride goes to eat a meal in each of these houses, thus literally incorporating their food into her bodily substance. Subsequently, on the feast of Id and Maulid, the bride must take a complete meal of cooked food to all the siblings and cousins of her parents-in-law, particularly those of the men who received sarongs. They thus incorporate her food into their bodily substance. After a few years, their substance has so fused she can be regarded more as a niece than as an affine. By this time one or more children will also have been born, linking the two sides by kinship in both the ascending generations, assuming the bride and groom were cousins, and in the descending generations, through shared grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Childbirth and the Seven Siblings

The Indonesian word for birth, *lahir*, is derived from the Arabic *zahir*, external form or manifestation. Birth is in fact considered to be the embodiment of a previously created soul. Birth magic to 'open' the mother's body during childbirth, and then to close it back up afterward, is one of the two forms of magic most sought by magicians when they go to meditate on top of graves. The other is invulnerability magic, which has the opposite objective of closing male bodies to hostile penetration. While male magicians

are not actually present at births, they often sit in an adjoining room and give advice or bespell medicines.

According to one of my most articulate informants, Hama, Seven [Spiritual] Siblings come into existence at a person's birth, each embodied in a different physical substance, as follows:

Ere inong “drinking water”. This is the amniotic fluid that bursts from a woman when she goes into labour. It is the first sibling to emerge, although it is not regarded as the eldest. It is the origin of the *nyaha*, spirit, breath or life force of the person. When it emerges it rises upwards, like water evaporating, and enters the attic of the house. It then descends again, like water precipitating, and enters the baby after its body emerges, causing it to begin breathing.

Muhammad. This was Hama's term for the body itself. The Prophet Muhammad is often taken as the paradigmatic human being, who represents the most perfect and complete human. In ritual contexts, all mankind can be included under his name. The body of the child already possesses an *alusu*, “ethereal aspect” before it is born, but receives the *nyaha* mentioned above, only after birth.

Ari ari “Placenta”. Although this emerges last at the time of birth, it is referred to as the baby's elder sibling. Traditionally, it was placed inside a coconut and stored in the attic of the house. Now, it is placed in a coconut and buried under a sprouted coconut near the house. The *ari ari* is a companion to the child in its early months. When a child who cannot yet focus its eyes is seen to smile to itself, it is said that it is looking at this elder sibling. Later on in life, certain illnesses can also be treated with the aid of this *ari ari*. According to Hama, the *nyaha* is continually moving back and forth between the *ari*

ari and the body. When one goes to sleep, the *nyaha* ascends again to the *ari ari* stored in the attic, just as it ascended at birth, and descends again to enter the body when one wakes up.

There are four more birth siblings which appear to have less subsequent ritual importance: *lai*, the umbilical cord, *rara*, blood, *bohon*, the caul, and *daging*, flesh. As we shall see, each of these Seven Siblings is also brought into correspondence with some part of the house.

The bloodied banana leaf on which the child was born is folded up and placed in a bamboo pole with a basket at one end called a *tompong*. Not everyone was traditionally permitted to erect a *tompong*. In general, only the nobles were allowed to make use of bamboo constructions in life-cycle rituals, such as birth, marriage and death. The *tompong* is planted in the ground beneath the house with its 'mouth' open to the sky. It is thus able to catch the *dalle*, "good fortune" that descends from heaven. Various other leaves are placed in it along with the birth leaf. Each leaf has a specific meaning and purpose. The mixture of the baby's blood with the medicinal leaves also serves to protect the baby from evil influences while it is in the extremely vulnerable condition of having an unhealed navel and soft fontanelle.

The *tompong* is left under the house for seven days, by which time the child's navel is healed and the next ritual can be performed. During this time, the child must remain in the house, and the mother is not supposed to leave it either, for fear her 'open' state may attract evil spirits to enter her which she would then bring back with her into

the house. During these seven days, the midwife (also a kind of *sanro*) continually massages the mother's stomach with hot water to close her womb back up.

Between the third and seventh day after birth, after the infant's umbilicus has fallen off, a ritual is held to seal the infant's fontanelle and navel with herbal medicines rendering them more resistant to penetration by spirits. It also marks the release of the mother from a number of restrictions, including the prohibition on leaving the house. The first step is to invite a local Imam to come and recite Arabic prayers. Then the *sanro* who acted as midwife for the child's birth takes over. She applies the herbal medicine to the navel and fontanelle of the child, and to the stomach of the mother. When the *sanro* is finished, a number of other women invited for the purpose will also take turns applying medicine to mother and child. Then trays containing different substances are passed around the child seven times. Hama linked this to the ritual circumambulation of the Ka'ba in Mecca during the pilgrimage.

Death and the Ancestors

During life, the *nyaha* enters and leaves the body during sleep, and especially during dreams. When a person dies, the *nyaha* leaves the body for the last time, rises into the air and disperses like mist, recalling its connection to water vapour at birth. Two aspects of the self do survive death, the *anja* and *alusu*. The first sign of the continuing existence of the dead is the possession of a near relative by the *anja*, or ghost, during the period when the individual identity of the dead person is still clearly remembered. This ghost makes demands through the possessed relative for offerings, such as its favourite cakes. It must be appeased and sent away again. The second step is the return of the *alusu*, "subtle essence", of ancestors so long dead they have become anonymous, and

their specific genealogical relationship to the living has been obscured. Unlike the dyadic relationship between a specific ghost and a living individual in possession, the relationship between an *alusu* and the members of a household is one of generalized, anonymous ancestor to an undifferentiated group of co-resident descendents. The co-residence of the descendents is crucial, for the ancestral spirit is installed in a shrine (*palangka*) located in the attic of a house. For the most part, in-married spouses are considered its descendents as well, given the preference for first and second cousin marriage. In some cases an in-marrying spouse may bring a *palangka* with them and install it side-by-side with the existing one. Thus the place of the ancestral/attic spirit must be located within the symbolic structure of the house as a whole.

The *alusu* announce their request for a *palangka* in which to stay by afflicting one of their descendents. Once installed, the spirit must be fed regularly with “complete offerings” of rice, meat and betel ingredients. Because of the anonymity of the spirits, it is the shrine itself which begins to acquire a reputation, and the most powerful tend to accumulate many narratives about the miraculous events they have caused. Most *palangka* were destroyed by the village chief as un-Islamic in the 1930s. But he seems to have missed many of the most powerful *palangka* of the noble families. The *palangka* of the mediums also seem to have survived. Before this campaign, *palangka* spirits played quite an active role in community affairs, bothering some people and helping others. One could be afflicted by a *palangka* spirit in someone else’s house, and be told by a *sanro* to go make an offering there. *Palangka* spirits were also of quite unequal power, some having a great reputation for working cures through their mediums. There

was a fairly close correlation between their power and the rank of their owners, so that the *palangka* of the hereditary ruler of Ara was the most powerful of all.

THE HOUSE

The “birth” of a house

Houses are constructed under the supervision of a ritual specialist called an *oragi*. The *oragi* must first of all be an expert in the properties of wood, both material and magical. He talks to the tree spirits before cutting the trees down to make sure they are willing to be made into a house. The *oragi* determines which posts should go in which part of the house by reading the whorls in the grain at the points where the branches were cut off. The most dangerous problem is the presence of bark that has been sealed up inside the wood in the form of an overgrown knot hole. This can cause illness in the future inhabitants of the house. All such holes must be located and chiseled out. The *oragi* must also make sure that all the posts and beams in the house are oriented in the right direction. That is, the end of the post or beam which was closest to the earth when it was growing in the tree must be closest to the earth, to the front, and to the “foot” of the house.

When beginning a new house, the *oragi* must make the first cut in the post destined to be the male post. The first shaving is carefully saved and placed in a bottle of “house oil”, *minyak bola* (K), which is put away in the attic in the same manner as the afterbirth of a child (or the first shaving from the keel of a ship). When all the materials for raising the house have been assembled, and all the helpers have arrived, a ritual called simply *ja'ja'kang* “making an offering” is performed by an *oragi* or a *sanro* knowledgeable in such matters. The object is to fill the new house with *nyaha* (K), life

force. It is said that every human construction like a house or a boat has a spirit of its own, called a *balapati*. Normally, this spirit cannot be seen, but occasionally it materializes (*a'talle*) as a small, shiny brown lizard with stripes down its back, about the size of a pen. One old man said that it is the job of the *oragi* to see that the *balapati* is introduced into a new house and remains contented within it thereafter. It has no parents, but is created by the *oragi* in the same way that the *nyaha* of humans is created and placed in our bodies by Allah, and does not derive from the parents of one's physical body. He said that the precise moment of the *balapati*'s entrance is when the beam that runs through the male and female posts from front to back goes through the central hole in the male post. The erection of a house is thus closely analogous to the birth of a child. (The same is true of the launching of a new boat).

When a new house is to be erected, the *oragi* first lays out the usual range of coloured rice, bananas and other materials on a mat in the center of where the house will stand. He recites a *mantera* over them, and they are packed up again for him to take home. Everything is now ready for the erection of the first house posts. I must digress a bit from the ritual to examine the significance of these posts. Two of the house posts are of the greatest symbolic significance. The *benteng polong* stands half way between the front and the back of the house, and is considered to be male. The *benteng bigasa* is the post immediately 'behind' it, and is female. One explanation of the meaning of *polong*, "to cut", comes from the fact that traditionally the two posts would have been obtained from a single forked tree. The *bigasa* would be cut off above the fork, while the *polong* would include the other fork and the common trunk. Thus the *polong* typically had a strange curving shape, with a crotch in the middle where the two forks had come

together. A hole would be drilled in this crotch to form the navel of the house, called the *talongko*, and various medicines called *bassiwaja* placed in it. Only some of the oldest houses still show evidence of this.

Marriage in Ara is uxori-local and houses are always inherited by the eldest daughter. The owner of the house and her husband sleep in the area defined by the *bigasa*, *polong* and the two posts immediately to the west of them. The wife sleeps nearer the female *bigasa* and the husband nearer the male *polong*. Because of this, I originally thought the two posts were meant to be like a husband and wife. Indeed, I was told that this was the case by one *sanro*. But this turned out to be an unusual opinion: the *polong* is more often seen as an elder brother, and the *bigasa* as a younger sister. When I suggested the two poles were like husband and wife, another *sanro* commented sharply that they are *salimara*, too closely related to marry. The two posts traditionally came from the same 'body', or trunk, in much the same way that Eve was taken from the body of Adam.

Another explanation of the term *polong* is that it is derived from the Selayarese word for sibling, *polo*, associating it with siblingship in this way. Husband and wife often address one another as elder sibling/younger sibling. Thus the husband/wife relationship tends to be assimilated to the elder/younger sibling relationship, rather than the other way around. We have already encountered this tendency to encompass difference and hierarchy within the elder/younger sibling relationship when I discussed the connection between the ancestral *palangka* and the placenta spirit. There will be further evidence of it below in the discussion of the *a'jaga a'kahajuang* ritual.

To return to the ritual creation of a new house, before the posts are actually put up, a bit of steel is buried under the spot where the male post will stand, along with red, white, black and yellow uncooked rice, a raw egg, a cooked egg and a bamboo shoot. The tier containing the male post is the first to be erected, following by the tier with the female post. The central posts should be erected on top of silver trays.

Before they are raised, a sarong appropriate to their gender is wrapped around each central post. Hama said that the two poles together formed the body of the house, an analogue to the human body, and the sarongs were like the *bohon*, caul, that is wrapped around the head of a newborn child. Various other ritual materials are hung on these posts at the same time, including coconuts, bananas and palm sugar. After several weeks, these are taken down and cooked into cakes, to be eaten by the household members.

Once the posts have all been erected, a temporary platform is constructed around the central posts, and a rough shelter is built on it. The owner and his family must sleep here in exposed conditions for three nights, *a'dingindingin*, “shivering”, in order to *appasiama* (K), accustom themselves, to the new dwelling. The house will not be truly broken in, however, until the *a'jaga a'kahjuang* described below is performed. This may be years later.

Feeding the House Spirits

While only male *oragi* have both the technical and ritual knowledge required to create a new house, many female *sanro* know how to look after the spirits of established houses. I got information about the *a'pakanre balapati* “feeding the house spirits” ritual from four separate specialists, and present a composite account here.

The ritual itself falls into two parts. In the first part, a set of offerings is prepared on a Thursday or Sunday night, and placed at various points within the house: where the male and female posts meet the floor, and in the attic. In the second part, often performed the following morning, a second set of offerings is prepared, and placed beneath the house at the base of the male, female and four corner posts, and in the earth in hole dug in the center of the house.

The first part of the ritual, conducted inside the house, involves the placing of offerings at the base of the male and female house posts inside the house, and in the attic. All these offerings consist of the same elements (rice, egg, banana, coconuts and betel leaves), which make up a complete ritual “body” that can serve as a receptacle for spirit. They are opposed to one another only on a numerical axis, containing nine, eight, and six mounds of rice, respectively. In the case of the male and female house posts, these numbers signify male (odd) and female (even). In the case of the attic offering, the rice is composed of an even set, but the bananas and coconuts of an odd set, indicating neutral or ambiguous gender.

When a person dies, two aspects of the self survive, the *anja* and *alusu*. The first sign of the continuing existence of the dead is the possession of a near relative by the *anja*, or ghost, during the period when the individual identity of the dead person is still clearly remembered. This ghost makes demands through the possessed relative for offerings, such as its favourite cakes. It must be appeased and sent away again. The second step is the return of the *alusu*, “subtle essence”, of ancestors so long dead they have become anonymous, and their specific genealogical relationship to the living has been obscured. Unlike the dyadic relationship between a specific ghost and a living

individual in possession, the relationship between an *alusu* and the members of a household is one of generalized, anonymous ancestor to an undifferentiated group of co-resident descendents. The co-residence of the descendents is crucial, for the ancestral spirit is installed in a shrine (*palangka*) located in the attic of a house. For the most part, in-married spouses are considered its descendents as well, given the preference for first and second cousin marriage. In some case an in-marrying spouse may bring a *palangka* with them and install it side-by-side with the existing one. Thus the place of the ancestral/attic spirit must be located within the symbolic structure of the house as a whole.

The second part of the ritual is conducted underneath the house. It involves placing offerings at the base of the four corner posts, at the base of the male and female posts, and in a hole dug in the ground at the center of the house. These seven offerings are all composed of the same materials, and are contrasted on a numerical axis and on a cooked/raw axis. In the center are the three offerings for the two center posts and for burial. Each has five sets of betel ingredients. On the periphery are the offerings for the four corner posts. Each has three sets of betel ingredients.

Next, the three central offerings beneath the house may be contrasted. As among the two central post offerings, there is an opposition between cooked (male) and raw (female). Otherwise, they and the buried offering are of identical composition, except that additional 'living' materials are placed in the earth: a coconut inflorescence, green bananas, and, above all, a "live" chick and sprouted coconut. One might say then that there is a three-way opposition between living (earth), raw (female) and cooked (male),

representing different degrees of transformation of the materials from “nature” to “culture”.

Finally, one can contrast the offerings as central and peripheral on a vertical axis. The attic and base offerings are associated in that both contain three mounds of white and three mounds of black rice and betel leaves. They are opposed in that the betel leaves in the attic offering are folded “standing”, *kalomping*, while those at the base are folded 'sitting', *deppo*. The attic offering is further associated with the buried offering in that both are unitary and undifferentiated, while the two central offerings within and beneath the house are differentiated according to gender (odd/even, cooked/raw).

Going from top to bottom, then, there is a single offering in the attic which is unitary and undifferentiated, there are two offerings in the middle which are opposed on a gender axis, there are six offerings at the bottom which are opposed as center and periphery, and there is a final, unitary offering beneath the earth.

This structure mirrors in some ways the view of the generations reflected in the kinship terminology. The kinship terminology recognizes gender difference only in the own and first ascending generations. It only distinguishes lineal from collateral kin in the immediately ascending and descending generations. Beyond this core, all ascendants and descendants within the bilateral descent group are merged into the undifferentiated categories of *bohe* “ancestor” and *ampu* “descendent”. The combined effect of the terminological and ritual systems is thus to transform gender difference from the point of greatest contrast and opposition at marriage to one of siblingship and, with the birth of

grandchildren, unity. This transformation is brought about in part by mapping each individual and the household as a whole onto the house as a material symbol.

Completing the house/household

A'jaga a'kahajuang “performing a protective ritual”.

This is a large scale ritual with many components which represents a sort of culmination and synthesis of the human, house and household rituals discussed earlier in this paper. The term *a'jaga a'kahajuang* refers to a whole complex of rituals performed one after the other. Minimally, it involves the sacrifice of a buffalo, which can be used then for several different purposes. At one level, the *a'jaga* serves as a step in the initiation of children into religion, since it is always accompanied by a ritual cutting of the children's hair by three village Imam, and very often, the children are circumcised as well. Ritual expressions of devotion to the Prophet Muhammad through the reading of his *Life* by al-Barzanji, and to the local Saint by laying offerings on his grave are also usual.

At a second level, and more significantly for the purposes of this paper, the ritual marks a crucial stage in the transformation of affinity into kinship, since it contains several crucial conflations of spouses with siblings. In order to perform this ritual, the heads of a household must have at least one child of each sex and one additional child, i.e. a 'completed' sibling set containing all the relevant structural oppositions (male/female, elder/middle/younger) (see McKinley, 1981). The children are often dressed in the costumes of a bride and groom. In this way a sibling set is ritually substituted for a married couple as the source of household fertility and completion. Further, this ritual repeats in part another ritual known as *a'jaga bunting*, “wedding

protection”, which is held at the end of a wedding if there are still enough resources left to sacrifice another buffalo.

By recapitulating the linking of the married couple to the house, the *a'jaga a'kahjuang* celebrates the successful outcome of a marriage. The bodily union of a husband and wife constructs a material vessel into which Allah can place the soul he has created. By producing a child, they become kin to one another and as members of the same house/household address one another with sibling terms. But the household is not complete until they really have produced a full sibling set, which ideally consists of the three relevant sibling positions: elder brother/elder sister/younger sibling. It is these three children who are the focus of the ritual which completes the construction of a house/household. In this ritual, the house is circled seven times, just as a new-born baby is circled seven times when its apertures are sealed. The successful raising of three children thus serves both to reproduce the household with an increment and to definitively transform marriage/affinity into siblingship/kinship.

At a third level, the ritual marks a stage in the “initiation” of a new house, since it is the primary occasion for the ritual circumambulation (*a'ngale*) every house must undergo at least once to protect its resident spirit. An activity peculiar to this ritual (and to the one held at the end of a wedding) is the ritual circling of the house by the family, *a'ngale*. All the members of the family are supposed to hold onto a special heirloom sash while they circumambulate the house seven times in an anti-clockwise direction. According to Hama, this protects the spirits (*nyaha*) of both the children and the house. It need only be carried out once for each house, indicating that the house itself is the main focus of this phase of the ritual. This recalls the ritual circling of the new-born child in

the *a'tompolo*, marking the “closure” of a house which has obtained self-sufficiency through the internal generation of a complete sibling set/household, just as the child is 'closed' when its navel and fontanelle are medicated.

The ritual thus plays on the ambiguity of householders, houses and house spirits at many levels. Hama explicitly linked the three children in the ritual to the house posts, saying that the male child corresponded to the male post, the female child to the female post, and the third child to the peripheral posts, indicating the sort of male/female, center/periphery oppositions we saw in the last section on house ritual.

CONCLUSIONS

The ultimate ideological effect of the ritual cycle I have been discussing in this paper is to transform duality into unity, to take a young man and a young women from separate houses/households and unite them. If there is a master symbol in all of this beside the house itself, it is that of siblingship. In the following schematic representation of this material, note that there is no room in this scheme for the sexually active married couple, and no room for the two most common forms of magic: invulnerability magic for young men which aims at closing their bodies to danger when they roam beyond the limits of the realm, and childbirth magic for young women which aims at opening their bodies to fertilization and the emergence of children while they are safely protected within the realm. Ideologically, the ritual system represents society as made up of self-contained, consanguineous households.

In summary, the mapping of alliance, descent and the human body onto the house and siblingship shows that the central concern in this ritual system is with the construction of a certain kind of social order. Society is seen as a series of nested,

relatively self-contained units which reproduce themselves without needing to exchange with other units. The basic unit is the human self, which is differentiated from birth into a set of spiritual “siblings”. This self is easily expandable into a household itself conceived as a unit differentiated into a set of “siblings” of successive generations. And while household members cannot, in fact, marry one another, deme members can. The deme itself can be thought of as a unit internally differentiated as a maximal sibling group of elders and juniors. Finally, spouses are ritually transformed into “siblings” through a series of rituals that equate them with their children, on the one hand, and stress their descent from a common, anonymous household ancestor, on the other.

Lévi-Strauss interprets the metaphor of the house as “solving” a symbolic problem caused by the corrosion of the “blood ties” of alliance and descent by political and economic interests, without those interests having yet been able to dispense with the idiom of kinship. I interpret the metaphor of the house in Ara as solving quite a different symbolic problem, caused by the adoption of the idioms of siblingship and place as a means of conceiving the social order. At the symbolic level, my conclusion as to the direct applicability of Lévi-Strauss's argument to Ara, and, by inference, to “centrist” Indonesia, must be negative.

Body parts (at birth)	House parts (spirits)	Household (members)	Kin terms
Placenta/ Elder sibling	Attic/Anonymous female ancestor: : even & odd offerings	grandparents (elder sibling)	Undifferentiated unity senior generation
Drinking water/Nyaha: Mediating element			
Muhammad/ Alusu	Male/female posts: : Elder brother/ younger sister: : odd/even offerings	B, Z, & younger sibling in a'jaga	Sexual duality medial generation
Caul	Sarongs on posts		
Blood	Base of peripheral posts/Descendents Offerings in fours	grandchildren (younger sibling)	Undifferentiated multiplicity junior generation

* * *

At a more pragmatic, or “functional” level, however, Lévi-Strauss's concept may prove more fruitful. Following Bloch, it would be possible to write a history of the political, or “functional” uses to which these rituals have been put over the past century. The rituals discussed in this paper been highly contested during this period in several different areas: there has been a political struggle over the use of 'feudal' symbols, a struggle of religion against superstition, and a struggle within religion over the true definition of Islam.

While one of the symbolic effects of the rituals discussed in this paper was to represent each household as an undivided unity of ancestors and descendents, another

was to legitimate the division of society in the ascribed ranks of nobles, commoners and slaves. Special bamboo structures, which were the prerogative of nobles, were used to claim high rank on the occasion of each ritual performance: at marriage, birth and funeral rituals. Thus while divisions internal to the house/household were played down in ritual, divisions between houses/households were played up. Honours and titles are accumulated by houses and passed down within them, just as in Europe of Japan. Moreover, there was a lot of scope for manipulation of the system to convert achieved status into ascribed rank. This characteristic has been stressed by virtually every writer on the Bugis-Makassarese peoples. One of the purposes of rituals was to push claims to higher status. If a house was allowed to get away with using certain symbols, its new rank would be secured. In this respect, Ara in the nineteenth century would have looked very like one of Lévi-Strauss's ranked societies where the "rules" seem made to be broken.

All of this came under sharp attack in the 1950s when an insurgency inspired by the values of the Modernist Islamic organization, the Muhammadiyah, extended its control over the countryside. When political "feudalism" came under attack, so did the rituals, for two reasons. First, as I have said, they were attacked for reinforcing "feudal" distinctions of hereditary rank. Second, traditional Sufi rituals honouring the Prophet and the Saints were an integral part of most life cycle rituals. Modernist Muslims are as intolerant of these rituals as they are of the spirit cults practiced by spirit mediums. Modernists have not rejected the life-cycle rituals as such, but have tried to detach them from "religion" and practice them as "culture".

In the course of this century, religious Modernism has often been adopted as a tactical means of advancement for those of middling status, and tends to be strongest among those who have progressed farthest by their own efforts, usually within the system of formal education. Modernists who have managed to land high-prestige salaried posts with the government have also tended to revive the most conspicuous forms of ritual display, which were suppressed in the 1950s, particularly at the marriages of their children. This is the classical route to social advancement. One thing that members of the “revolutionary” generation of 1950-65 have learned is that you cannot reform religion and society at the same time. Their social revolution ultimately failed, and they have made their peace with a hierarchical social system. But they press on with their purification of religion.

It is perhaps at this more “historical” level that we should look for the relevance of Lévi-Strauss's argument, for it is here that his concern with myth and history, kinship and class is located. The “house” and the rituals by which it is reproduced have shown a remarkable ability to survive in the face of enormous changes emanating from the political and religious domains. While my over-all argument has been that the house is a symbolic device serving as a model for an enduring social order based on the idiom of sibblingship, it is also a device whereby competition for wealth and power can be carried out under the cloak of innate differences in rank. Further refinement of this concept is clearly in order.

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The interpretations contained in this paper are mine alone.

- ⁱⁱ It should be understood that I am writing in the ‘ethnographic present’ and that some of these practices have been abandoned in the last generation. For an eye-witness account of them in Bira in the 1930s, see Collins, 1937: 148-162.