Chapter 11. Histories of Diversity, Hierarchies of Unity: The Politics of Origins in a South-West Moluccan Village[1]

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> Narratives are not only structures of meaning but structures of power as well.
>
> Edward Bruner (1986:152)

Introduction

Writing of local origin "myths" from the "Timorese Archipelago" and the "Moluccas", F.A.E. van Wouden observes that "one is struck by the remarkable points of resemblance … [between] … the system delineated in these myths … [and] … the structure of society" (1968:195). The legitimating potential of local origin narratives alluded to by van Wouden has also been discussed in a number of more recent studies[2] of cultural groups in "Eastern Indonesia" although few of these works extend the analysis of "myth" beyond the charter paradigm originally proposed by Malinowski (1926) and adopted by van Wouden.

In conceptualizing myth narratives as epiphenomenal charters for the organization of local social and political orders van Wouden and others generally ignore the historical context in which such narratives are constructed, expressed and rendered meaningful.[3] As Sahlins (1981, 1985) suggests, cultural narratives cannot, in fact, be isolated from the wider social and political context in which they are located. Such narratives are shaped by and gather force from their dialectical engagement of other historically-specific stories (see also Bruner 1986 and Kapferer 1988). In this respect, narratives and the particular cultures in which they are articulated are not as isolated or as pristine as many anthropologists would have us believe. Indeed, as James Clifford points out with reference to the Trobriand Islanders, individuals "invent their culture within and against the contexts of recent colonial history" (1988:12). Clifford's remarks also apply to the cultures of the so-called "Eastern Indonesia" field of study, among which the people of the village of *Amaya*, Maluku Tenggara may be counted by some.[4]

Although positioned on the geographic margins of the archipelago, the people of *Amaya* are directly incorporated within the framework of the Indonesian

Nation-State and have long experienced the effects of European colonial encapsulation and Christian proselytization. As a result, local origin narratives are but one of several discursive elements which inform social and political life in *Amaya*. In this respect, the ideologies and ontologies of Protestantism, Indonesian Nationalism and modern capitalism create "new spaces in discourse" (Bruner 1986:152) within which the politics of identity and authority are given expression. These inter-connected "spaces" are interwoven with existing cultural forms and meanings to produce new symbols of opposition, new relations of asymmetry and new orders of hierarchy (cf. Lattas n.d.).

It is precisely through their engagement and coalescence with the discursive structures which inform daily life that the stories contained within local narratives resonate with the same configurations of logic which mediate social action and notions of identity. Consequently, these narratives are held to express stories of ontological and cosmological significance and it is in the circumstances of quotidian life that the themes, relations, and hierarchical possibilities folded into the narratives are realized (cf. Kapferer 1988).

In this paper, I focus primarily upon the conjunction of local origin narratives with the logic and practices of the Indonesian State. In so doing, I "emplot" (Ricoeur 1988:4) some of the hierarchical relations and disjunctions which are empowered by this nexus. I begin by considering some of the themes contained in an abbreviated version of the central *Mayawo* origin narrative. Of specific concern here is the process by which social narratives are naturalized and, at the same time, represented as historical truth. I then locate the narrative themes of origins, precedence and hierarchy within the context of everyday life in *Amaya* and examine particular aspects of their engagement with the locally articulated ideology of the Indonesian State. In conclusion, I discuss some of the wider social implications of the dialectics of politics and culture at *Amaya*.

The Setting

The village of *Amaya* is situated on the NNW coast of the volcanic island of Damer (*Asomo*) in the Maluku Tenggara region of the Province of Maluku, Indonesia. At the most inclusive level, the approximately 600 Austronesian-speaking inhabitants of this village refer to themselves in the vernacular as *Mayawo* which, literally translated, means the "people of Amaya".[5] The appellation *Mayawo*, however, can also be used in a more restrictive sense to distinguish descendants of autochthonous ancestors (*upho mamso*) from those individuals broadly classified as "immigrants" (*deyo dachmodini* "people afterwards they came"). Commonly referred to as **pendatang** in Ambonese-Malay, "immigrants" are those people who arrived at *Amaya* in the present century, the majority of whom came in the period after the Second World War, and the descendants of such individuals. These people are further identified on the basis of their place of origin. "Immigrants" from other villages on the island of Damer

are called ***larso*** while those individuals who originate from other islands in the region are referred to as *awvno*.

The indigenous village residents are variously affiliated with one or more of the local descent-based groups referred to as *Uma*. The term *Uma* is not used to denote groups of ***pendatang*** individuals. Groups of related "immigrants" (both *larso* and *awvno*) are alternatively referred to as ***marga*** (a term which, although commonly used throughout Maluku, actually derives from Sumatra, where it can mean either "district" or "clan"), ***pamili*** (derived from the Dutch word for "family") or ***fam*** (< Dutch: "familie").

The term *Uma* has two basic levels of signification. On the one hand, *Uma* signifies a physical structure or dwelling. On the other hand, it denotes a group of related individuals who recognize a common ancestor, or group of ancestors, and share a common ancestral name.[6] Prior to the early 1900s, *Uma* was used in the latter context to describe each of the 13 indigenous matri-lines which occupied separate "houses". However, as a result of early twentieth century Christian influences (notably, the patriarchal emphasis of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Ambonese evangelists who were instrumental in disseminating Protestantism throughout Maluku Tenggara) and the influx of numerous family groups from nearby islands which followed the Dutch pacification of the war-like *Mayawo, Uma* is now generally used to describe indigenous groups of differentially related cognatic kin living in several dwellings. Notwithstanding these on-going transformations, *Uma* are locally regarded as unique configurations of people (both past and present) and places. For indigenous *Mayawo*, the identification of *Uma* with place and their relationships to other "houses" is narrativized in local "histories" of origin.

"Histories" of Diversity

Mayawo regard their accounts of the origins of each of the seven founding *Uma* in *Amaya* as historical fact. In the vernacular, these narratives are called *hnyero*, a term which is interchangeably used with the Indonesian word *sejarah*, and like its Indonesian synonym, *hnyero* is locally translated as "history". These narratives are specifically distinguished from the genre of stories known as *tintincha* which are considered to be fantastic "tales" or "myths".[7]

The corpus of *Mayawo* "historical" narratives does not explicitly constitute esoteric or restricted knowledge in *Amaya*. Most people have some knowledge, albeit fragmentary, of the events spoken of in these "histories". There are, however, a handful of elderly men who are considered by the community as the most knowledgeable with regard to the details of these narratives. These men are, for the most part, the "leaders" (*ryesro*) of the several village *Uma* and are knowledgeable not only about the origin "history" for their own *Uma* but also know something of the stories of other *Uma*. In addition to the *ryesro*, there is

one person, in particular, who is locally considered to be the repository for this body of knowledge (cf. Fox 1979). This person is accorded the title of "the one who speaks" (*orliro*) and is locally regarded as the "mouth" (*nungcho*) for the "house" of the "village head" (**Kepala Desa/Bapak Rajah**) and other indigenous *Uma*.

While local origin narratives primarily recall the origins and arrival of the seven founding *Uma* in *Amaya* they also disseminate details of the origins of a number of other *Uma*, which are in some way linked to or derive from one of the seven original "houses". The incorporation of these secondary "histories" within this wider narrative structure reflects, to some extent, the nature of the relationship which exists between these connected groups.

On the occasion of public rituals, the "histories" of the seven founding *Uma* are narrated in sequence, beginning with the first *Uma* to arrive at *Amaya* and concluding with the last arrival (*Surlialy, Soplero, Helweldery, Awyeti/Tronanawowoy, Halono, Newnuny* and *Umpenwany*). Generally speaking, only cursory references are made to the origins of the associated "houses" and no reference is made at all to the more recent arrivals in *Amaya*.

Before I present a version of the narrative which recounts the origins of *Amaya*, there are a number of points I wish to emphasize here with respect to *Mayawo* "histories". The first is that historical knowledge does not constitute an immutable field of meaning but is subject to cultural variation and innovation. As Bruner (1986) rightly points outs, the telling of these origin narratives is informed by the context, the audience and previous "tellings". Given these considerations, the reproduction of the narrative becomes also a dimension of its transformation (cf. Sahlins 1985). In this connection, it is interesting to note the incorporation of other narrative structures within these local accounts.

Secondly, these "histories" make powerful political statements about both cultural unity and diversity as well as providing social and historical comment on the authentication of local practices, beliefs and positions of authority. In this respect, these "histories" can be viewed as representing important discursive forms for the expression and validation of identity.

Thirdly, following Foucault's (1978) thesis that knowledge and power directly imply each other, the negotiability of these "histories" is not so surprising especially in light of the tensions that exist between certain individuals and groups within the village and the political significance attached to these accounts.

In the following extensively abridged version of the central *Mayawo* origin narrative, the **Kepala Desa** or **Bapak Rajah** of *Amaya* relates the "history" of his own *Uma* called *Surlialy*. Significantly, this recitation also includes references to the other *Uma* which founded *Amaya* for, as the *Kepala Desa* pointed out, and I began to realize during my stay in the village, the "history" of each local

"house" cannot be disengaged from the origin "histories" of other village "houses". Indeed, it is precisely through this cross-referencing that the "history" of each *Uma* gains its significance. The narrative begins at *Mt Lumtuni*, the ancestral "home" of many of the indigenous "houses" in *Amaya*:

> The ancestors of the "house" of *Surlialy* originated from the peak of the mountain *Lumtuni*.[8] From the mountain they descended to the sea and walked in an easterly direction until they eventually arrived at a cape, where they met with the people of Melu [Melu is a neighbouring village]. They called this place *Lulsunloyeni*. Then they returned to the mountain *Lumtuni*.[9]

> Once again the *Surlialy* people left the mountain and descended towards the sea. On the way they stopped at a place which they named *Kokomani* after the *Koko* tree which grows there. They then continued on until they arrived at *Amaya*. Here they built a village and enclosed it with a stone wall. Then they set off again and stopped at the beach *Avwara*. At this place they met with the two *Soplero* ancestors. These two people were siblings who originated from the volcano on the eastern side of the island called *Vworlale*. The *Surlialy* ancestors invited the two siblings to come and join them in *Amaya*. However, one of the siblings did not want to go. This person took one half of the cooking pot they carried with them and set out alone towards the east. The other sibling, gathered up the remaining half of the earthen vessel and followed the *Surlialy* ancestors to *Amaya*.

> Later there arrived at *Amaya* the ancestors of the group *Helweljeri*, who originated from the southern side of the mountain *Lumtuni*. The three groups came together to form one village, *Amaya*. The ancestors of *Surlialy*, because they were the first to arrive at *Amaya*, divided the village land between all the groups. Those people settled the village which started from that day until the present.

> The ancestors of the three groups then formed a decision making body in *Amaya*. Previously people did not follow government like the government there is today. The government of those people was still carried by tradition and they made a government where one person was leader. Previously, the ancestors of *Surlialy* were two people, younger brother and older brother. They did not know who of the two should become leader and carry the people of *Amaya*. Then the older brother said to his younger brother, "I will stay below and I will follow you". From that moment on, they became *Uhro* and *Mahno*. The *Uhro* person who was the oldest was named *Uhrulu Uhrulyai* and his younger brother who became *Mahno* was called *Marnulu Lokelyawo*. From that moment

on there existed in *Amaya Uhro* and *Mahno*. The *Surlialy* people became both *Uhro* and *Mahno*, they own that history until now. Those people were related and I don't know now why one is below the other, why they made it like that, *Uhro Mahno*.[10] When the village was finished and had become one, the people of *Surlialy, Soplero* and *Helweljeri* assembled and named three leaders, one for each "house".

Not long afterwards, the war began and the people ran everywhere.[11] Then the people who originated from the island of *Dai*, the people of *Awyeti* and *Ttasuni* [who amalgamated to form the *Tronanawowoy Uma*] as well as the people of *Newnuny* came to *Amaya*. After the war had finished the people from Luang came, the *Halono* people. Not long afterwards the last to arrive in *Amaya* came, the people of *Wenowani*. After they had all arrived there were then seven leaders (*Ryesro*) who controlled *Amaya*. Each brought their own beliefs and practices [**adat**] and little by little these were amalgamated to form the traditions and customs [**adat**] of *Amaya*. *Surlialy* invited those people and one by one they came to *Amaya*. *Surlialy* then carried those people like an older brother carries his younger brother and so it has been that way until this day.

The "houses" of *Helweljeri, Soplero* and *Surlialy* together they owned land around the village. When *Awyeti, Newnuny* and *Ttasuni* came they brought with them land and gardens and gave their gardens and land to all the people of *Amaya* so that everyone in the village could use this land. Thus, from the day they came to *Amaya* until now, this has been the case.

As the foregoing version indicates, the central *Mayawo* origin narrative represents, to borrow Ricoeur's phrase, "a temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous" (Ricoeur 1985:157). The unification of diverse elements, represented in the form of the different ancestral *Uma*, provides the dominant and mediating theme of this narrative. The narrative variously "emplots" this theme through a triadic sequence consisting of disorder, a journey and the restoration of order.

The first part of the narrative establishes the existence of a number of different ancestral groups which originate from various places, both on Damer and on the nearby islands of Luang and Dai. These groups, for various reasons, leave their sites of origin.

The second phase of the narrative recalls the journeys of the different groups and details their passage over the landscape. The places where the ancestors of each group stopped and performed certain activities are, in the narrative, transformed into durable "traces" (Ricoeur 1988:120) and significant places

through the act of naming. In this way, history is incorporated as a dimension of the physical landscape through the process of identifying the events and identities inscribed in the narratives with the topographic features of the environment. The landscape, therefore, constitutes an historical text which can be read and interpreted by members of *Mayawo* society. Reference to these marks in the landscape represents the means by which the present can be engaged to account for the veracity of the past.

The third phase delineated in the narrative refers to the restoration of order through the amalgamation of the different *Uma* to form the "*negri*" (cf. Geertz 1980) or localized "state" of *Amaya* and the subsequent social classification of this difference.

The logic for this classification is expressed in the narrative in terms of the intra-generational difference and opposition between younger and elder siblings. The division within the "house" of *Surlialy*, based on the relative age distinctions between the two primal male siblings, does not result in the fragmentation of this "house". Instead, this diversity becomes the model or scheme for a new social and political order. The "house" of *Surlialy* is, in this instance, depicted as the generative source for a series of relations largely represented in terms of the oppositions and asymmetries of younger and elder, ruler and ruled, encompassed and encompassing.

The theme of siblingship suggests difference and opposition, with respect to age, and unity and complementarity, in the form of common origins. In a Dumontian sense, therefore, the "houses" are differentiated in their relation to the founding "house" and unified in their identification with place. Diversity, as depicted in the narrative, is thus legitimated through unity and the integrity of the group (as well as that of the individual) is constructed as dependant upon the encompassing unity and hierarchical proclivity of the wider configuration (cf. Kapferer 1988).

In addition to the notion of siblingship discussed above, the relationship between the "houses" is also expressed in terms of temporal and spatial precedence (cf. Lewis 1988). In this connection, the "house" of *Surlialy* precedes all other groups mentioned in the narratives and thus broadly defines the social and spatial placement of all subsequent "houses" within *Amaya*.

A number of other oppositions and asymmetrical relations are expressed within the context of the *Mayawo* origin narrative. Briefly, these include the distinctions between inland and coast, highland and lowland, rulers and ruled, male and female, autochthenes and immigrants. This latter opposition remains a point of contention among members of the two "houses" which stand in a sibling relationship to each other.

A significant dimension of these "histories" is the portrayal of the role of the founding "house" in the establishment of *Amaya*. According to these "histories", the reconstitution of order and the construction of a new sociopolitical organization is brought about by the benevolent actions of the founding "house" of *Surlialy*. In the narrative, violence and force are not the devices employed to create this unified body. Rather, it is the conformity and assent of the differentiated parts which legitimates and empowers the encompassing system. It is interesting to note in this connection that the origin narrative for the founding "house" of *Surlialy* encompasses the origins of all the "houses" in *Amaya* and, in so doing, reflects both the themes of local histories and the structures of contemporary *Mayawo* society.

Unlike Dumont's characterization of Hindu society, in which hierarchy is exclusively linked to the "opposition between the pure and the impure" (1970:66), the relationship between social groups, as articulated in the above narrative, is not informed by a singular, dominant oppositional principle. Instead, a plurality of oppositions, asymmetries and disjunctures which, either singularly and/or in various combinatory relationships, inform, reproduce and refract multiple hierarchical potentialities, are expressed within the framework of this narrative (see Foucault 1978; also Fox 1989). I stress here that local narratives do not explicitly define a specific hierarchical structure — they signify the ideological, tropic and ontological[12] configurations inhering to a number of hierarchical expressions which may be given realization within the context of social action.

For the immigrant residents of *Amaya*, however, local "histories" of origin do not hold the same value and meaning as they do for the indigenous members of the village. Immigrants can be viewed as displaced persons; dislocated from the culturally constituted source of their own identity and not able to locate themselves in relation to the social ontology idealized in local narratives. For these people, the Indonesian Nation-State (as well as the Protestant Church of Maluku) is perceived as offering alternative modes of being, corporate groups of affiliation and origin narratives.

Hierarchies of Unity

In *Amaya*, "metaphors of history" (cf. Sahlins 1981) have, in many instances, become idioms of practice. In this section, I examine how the oppositions, asymmetries and disjunctions disseminated in local narratives are ideologically reproduced as hierarchical relations.

The seven founding "houses" of *Amaya*, together with six other "houses" which are considered to originate from, or be closely linked to them, are all classified as *mahno* — a derivation of the name of the younger of the two primal male *Surlialy* siblings who figure prominently in local origin narratives. Of the

two non-*mahno* ''houses'', one is classified as *uhro*, after the eldest ancestral *Surlialy* sibling, and the other as *ota*. Members of this last ''house'' are locally regarded as descendants of slaves brought from East Timor hundreds of years ago who were adopted by a *mahno* ''house''.[13]

In accordance with the themes disseminated in local origin narratives, the ''house'' locally classified as *uhro* is considered to be ''lower'' (*lo arè*) in status and rank than those ''houses'' which stand as ''younger siblings'' (*mahno*) to this ''house''. Both *mahno* and *uhro* ''houses'', however, are locally regarded as standing ''above'' (*ahuli*) the only ''slave'' (*ota*) ''house'' in the village.

The classification of all but two of the indigenous *Uma* in *Amaya* as *mahno* does not mean, however, that each of the respective ''houses'' shares the same social and political status. In this connection, the ''house'' of *Surlialy*, which is portrayed in the narrative as the first founding ''house'', is widely accorded socio-political authority in relation to the other ''houses'' and groups in the village. On the basis of their historically verified temporal and spatial precedence, this ''house'' claims, among other things, the title of *lelehro* (''ruler'' [of the village]) or **Bapak Rajah** (''king father'')/**Orang Kaya** (''powerful person'') in Ambonese-Malay. In accordance with the logic of precedence, the title and office of ''ritual leader'' (*ryesro kpawo*) is associated with the second ''house'' to arrive at *Amaya* while the position of ''Lord of the land'' (*dochnuda dorraso*) or **Tuan Tanah** in Ambonese-Malay is claimed by the third ''house''.

The large number of local residents classified as ''immigrants'' or *pendatang* are not directly incorporated into this system of social classification. However, their very exclusion from this framework effectively structures their social placement on the margins of *Mayawo* society.[14]

The differential classification of local ''houses'' and their constituent members as *mahno, uhro, ota* or **pendatang** is culturally expressed and validated in terms of the dialectical interplay of the logic and continuities of local origin ''histories'' with present social practices. It is important to note here that, in the contemporary situation, the social expression of these classifications is fundamentally contextual and relational. The classification of certain individuals as **pendatang**, for instance, is suspended on those occasions when notions of a unified community are ideologically stressed and politically enacted (e.g. ''National Independence Day''). Similarly, while local people acknowledge the broad social category of *mahno* they also, however, construct and recognize an infinite number of classificatory permutations arising from, they say, ''marrying inside'' (*mehlim arolmo*).

Marriage constitutes one context in which these social classifications are accorded significance (see Pannell 1989). In *Amaya*, marital alliances between ''houses'' are primarily negotiated on the basis of the culturally disseminated

belief that "*mahno* must marry *mahno*" (*Mahnoni mehlimo mahnoni*). According to this principle of group endogamy, *uhro* should marry *uhro* and *ota* marry *ota*. However, whether people of these two *Uma* conform to this prescript or not is not generally considered to be as important as maintaining the integrity of those "houses" classified as *mahno*.

The culturally-recognized body of men empowered to act on the occasion of marriage is known as *ryesro viti mahnoni po viya*, literally, "seven *Uma* heads plus *lelehro* makes eight". These men are also locally regarded as responsible for the "proper" observation of *hnulcho* (or **adat** in Ambonese-Malay) defined practices.[15] As the name suggests, not all of the "houses" in the village are represented by this council of elderly men. Only the heads or *ryesro* of the seven original *Uma* and the **Bapak Rajah** comprise this group. The other village *Uma* classified as *mahno* are considered to be represented by their source "house". Members of immigrant families, *uhro* and *ota* "houses" are prohibited from holding office on this council.

According to local perceptions, the organization of this body of men is structured in accordance with the events and themes delineated in local "historical" narratives. The men who make up this council are regarded as the most knowledgeable concerning these "histories". The position of these men engenders the degree of knowledge they possess which, in turn, substantiates their standing in the political order. Thus, claims of authority made by this body are legitimated by an ideology empowered by local origin narratives rendered as "history". The political justification of this system of authority gains further weight when linked to the administrative practices of the Republic of Indonesia.

For many of the immigrant residents of the village, and those people affiliated with the "houses" classified as *uhro* and *ota*, the State is seen as offering the means by which the disenfranchised can become franchised members of the national community and subsequently, the local political community. I suggest here that the structures and principles upon which the State operates represent for these people utopian alternatives to what are regarded as restrictive modes of being and strategies of integration. To the historically-generated hierarchies of power and ontology, the State offers the egalitarian alternatives of democracy and equality.[16] However, as I discuss in this section, in practice the myths of nationalism and those of local culture are politically folded upon each other so as to appear to delineate similar strategies, oppositions and themes — themes which coalesce around the notions of unity and diversity.

Within the administrative hierarchy of the Indonesian State, the village or *desa* is the smallest unit. The organization of local government in each village or *desa* in Indonesia is theoretically quite similar and consists of a pyramid-type structure of authority. The highest authority in the village is the **Kepala Desa** or "village head" who is responsible for, among other things, the welfare of

residents, the maintenance of law and order, the collection and payment of local taxes, the registration of births and deaths, upholding the principles of **Panca Sila** (the five tenets which inform the practices of the Nation-State) and representing the interests of the Indonesian Government. Generally, the appointment of the **Kepala Desa** is made by the district administrator (**Camat**) based upon recommendations received from village residents. The office of **Bapak Rajah** ("king father"), the "cultural head" of the village, on the other hand, is one inherited according to local **adat** practices. In recent times, with the movement towards total State hegemony, there has been a trend in the more developed and less remote areas of the Province of Maluku for the position of **Kepala Desa** to be filled by a different individual from that of the **Bapak Rajah**. In *Amaya*, however, the two remain inseparable; the **Bapak Rajah** is the **Kepala Desa** and vice versa.

According to principles of State administration, the **Kepala Desa** is also the head of the State-sponsored local government body in the village known as **Lembaga Musyawarat Desa** ("village consultative committee"), commonly referred to by the acronym LMD. In theory, this committee consists of an elected secretary, treasurer and a dozen or so representatives from the **desa** population. However, in practice this is not always the case. In *Amaya*, the village consultative committee (LMD) is comprised of the **Bapak Rajah**, the seven *Uma* heads, the heads of the four territorial aggregates known as *ono* (or *soa* in Ambonese-Malay) and the **Marinyo** or "village crier". The members of this committee are not democratically elected by the residents of the village. Rather, the positions are either inherited by *mahno* men, as is the case for the **Bapak Rajah**, the seven *Uma* heads and the **Marinyo**, or nominated by the **Bapak Rajah** himself, as is the situation with the four *ono* heads, who are also affiliated with *mahno* "houses". This system of selection effectively precludes immigrants, *uhro* and *ota* persons from holding these positions and consequently they are marginalized within the local political domain.

It is this body of men who largely define the temporal, spatial and practical limits of *desa* life. The demarcation of time in *Amaya* reflects the degree of local identification with and participation in the village or *desa* constructed as a cohesive community. In *Amaya*, Mondays and Tuesdays are designated as community work days and all able-bodies adult residents of the village are required to participate in the State-funded village development project at hand. The State-coined community development ethic of *gotong royang* or "mutual assistance" is frequently cited as the logic which informs many of these community-based activities. **Gotong royang** is seen as reflecting cultural ethics of generosity, generated by kinship relations and shared residence. In this context, the principles and logic of the State and local culture are conflated in the social and political articulation of community and national identity.

The LMD oversees the working of the next level of local government known as the ***Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa*** (LKMD) ("village community's maintenance committee"). This body consists of a number of officers, including chairman, deputy chairman, secretary and treasurer, with the entire population of the village comprising the general members of this institution. The LKMD is divided into ten sections, with a leader appointed to each section. The sections within LKMD are concerned with such things as religion, education, family planning, women's development and life style, to name but a few.

The institution of LKMD is a recent phenomenon in *Amaya*, having been formed in late 1984. The ***Bapak Rajah*** is the chairman of the LKMD. The office-holders of this committee are delegated by him and consist of *mahno* men, two of whom are also members of the LMD. This executive body appoints the leaders of each of the ten sections which make up the formal structure of LKMD. Three of the executive officers were nominated to be section leaders. Interestingly in this instance, one of the section leaders is a woman and another, an *uhro* man. Notwithstanding these recent appointments, in practice the LKMD is a nominal government structure. Meetings of the LKMD, which in principle should include all adult members of the community but in practice usually only involve the male members of the village, are called when the LMD wish to inform the residents of new directives. At each meeting, there is a session in which the executive answers questions from the general audience. Only a handful of men ever use this opportunity to voice their opinion about the matters at hand. While these meetings and the LKMD in general may appear to operate along democratic lines, the views of the members have little political weight in influencing the outcome of any meeting. The majority of issues have already been decided prior to the convening of the meeting.

In *Amaya*, it can be seen that it is the decision-making body *ryesro viti mahnoni po viya* cum LMD, and not the LKMD, which wields power and influence in the community. In short, this body has taken on the role of the State at the local level of village government. The "body politic" in this context refers to more than just a particular structure of political organization or the individual as a politicized subject. It delineates a systematic and coherent constellation of strategies, mechanisms and modes for the communication and integration of relations of power and identity, as witnessed in the following incident.

In the 1989/85 financial year, the LMD submitted plans for a new community hall (***Balai desa***) to the ***Camat's*** office in Kisar and received a subsidy of one million ***rupiah*** towards the estimated total costs of three and half million ***rupiah***.

The LMD decided that the new community hall would be built on the site occupied by the "ancestral house" (*umtuvtuvcha*) of the ***Bapak Rajah***. So on a Monday morning late in June 1986, the men of the village tore down the bamboo and sago leaf constructed ancestral house. In its place they would erect a new

concrete, zinc-roofed community hall which would also continue to function as the ancestral house of *Uma Surlialy*.

In November of that year, the wooden frame of the building was erected. The erection of the main posts in the construction of a house is an important ritual event in *Amaya* and is usually celebrated according to local *adat* practices. However, on this occasion, the day set aside for the erection of the posts was proclaimed a holiday for the 100 or so school-age children and the entire village assembled at the house site. The local representatives of the Indonesian government, the **Kepala Desa**, and members of the LMD and LKMD committees, wore their official State uniforms on this occasion. Before the frame was erected, the origin "histories" of each of the seven founding *Uma* were narrated in order of their arrival at *Amaya*. According to **adat**, this task is the prerogative of the village orator, a man traditionally selected from the *uhro* "house" of *Surlia*. However, on this occasion, it was decreed by the **Bapak Rajah** that the orator would only narrate the "history" concerning the origins of the first "house" to arrive at *Amaya*; that is, the narrative for *Uma Surlialy*. The "histories" of the six other founding "houses" were consequently narrated by the respective *ryesro* for these "houses". No reference was made to the origin "histories" of the numerous immigrant residents in the village or to the ancestry of those "houses" classified as *uhro* and *ota*.

Afterwards, the **Bapak Rajah** spoke at length to those assembled in front of the **Balai Desa**/*Umtuvtuvcha* about the shared "historical" traditions of the *mahno, uhro* and *ota* members of the village and reminded all those present (both "indigenous" and "immigrant" residents) of their community responsibilities and obligations as members of both the *desa* of *Amaya* and the nation of Indonesia. "Today", he concluded,

> we have **adat** together with LMD and LKMD. In *Amaya* we do not separate government from the seven leaders, the *ryesro*, they walk together. We speak Indonesian and we refer to the government but we still live in our own land and we still own the tradition of seven *ryesro*. Those leaders hold **adat** from before until this day. Previously, the *adat* of the original inhabitants of *Amaya* were separate. Then they taught each other their customs and they formed one body of custom which is called **adat** *Amaya*. The **adat** of *Amaya* teach people so that they can live together with their kinsmen in *Amaya*. The customs of *Amaya* are appropriate for the people here, for all people to live by, so that people can live in a humble and modest way. With these customs we can finish things together, like when we thatch the roofs of houses in the village or sit down together and feast. We open coconut fronds and sit down on the ground together and together we eat and drink. We who live in *Amaya* have to follow these customs, we cannot copy other **adat**. We

people of *Amaya* are very different from others, we are very humble. We cannot elevate ourselves above others.

The founders of this village were two men and two women. The men were called *Luane* and *Harmei* and the women were called *Achleli* and *Rarlairo*. The people who are referred to as the founders of this village are the ancestors of *Surlialy*. Their ancestral house has recently been renewed. The section below is called the *Balai Desa* ["community hall"] and is the office while above is the ancestral "house". They will finish this building soon. People who are young don't you forget this history, carry it with you everyday. If you are far away, you remember, don't you forget at all.

With the conclusion of this speech, the men then proceeded to erect the wooden frame of the new **Balai Desa**/*umtuvtuvcha*.

There are a number of interesting points to emerge from this event. The construction of the new State-subsidized community hall on the site of the ancestral house of *Surlialy* affirms, in a most concrete manner, the position and authority of the **Bapak Rajah** and his "house" in the political order of the village. On this occasion, he simultaneously wears the hat of the official representative of the national government and that of *adat* head. The two positions are effectively homogenized into a single identity.

The actions of the **Bapak Rajah** and others in this incident are not seen for the political strategies they are. For many people, the **Bapak Rajah** and the members of his *Uma* have given their ancestral house for the benefit and good of the community. Such an act is viewed as an honourable gesture made by a virtuous man. By acting in "good faith" towards the other members of the community, the **Bapak Rajah** secures the misrecognition of the community and amasses the symbolic capital necessary for the reproduction of these strategies of integration (cf. Bourdieu 1977). The decision, in the above incident, to prevent the orator, an *uhro* man, from demonstrating his knowledge of the narratives is an act which consciously shifts the accent of power away from him to those already inculcated in the apparatus of authority. This subterfuge on the part of the **Bapak Rajah** and the seven *Uma* heads is part of an on-going process of political consolidation and denotes the continual tension that exists between their claims of authority and the belief offered by the members of the community.

At another level, the conflation of this event with elements of the central *Mayawo* origin narrative by the **Kepala Desa** not only serves to further legitimate his own authority and that of his "house" but also ensures the status of this event as an historical and immutable truth. In this incident, the hierarchical possibilities disseminated in local narratives are spatially and politically given

expression. In turn, the event is injected back into the narrative to produce a dialectical interplay of meaning and form.

In *Amaya*, the thematic logic inscribed in local "histories" of origin circumscribes the parameters of what is constructed as *hnulcho*/**adat** and, in so doing, informs the content and context of social and political action in the village. The themes of siblingship, unity and diversity, which structure social and political relations in *Amaya*, are represented as corresponding with the logic which pervades and organizes the political anatomy of the State. The symbols, rites and administrative structures of the State are thus interpreted and represented in terms of the categories and meanings which also inform local *hnulcho*/**adat** practices. This ideological appropriation further serves to legitimate what are already regarded as historically verified forms and practices. Within these ideological horizons, strategies of integration are dissimulated and "naturalized", the diverse interests of the non-indigenous and disenfranchised members of the population are homogenized and the objectified classifications of rank, age and gender operating within the community are given a semblance of orthodoxy (cf. Bourdieu 1977). Within this context, local origin narratives produce the "naturalization of their own arbitrariness" (Bourdieu 1977:164) because no cultural distinction is made between the ideal and the real. The logic which "history" produces in this context is also that which mediates social reality.

In *Amaya*, the consent and cooperation of the residents which empowers local strategies of integration arises from the sharing of a common ontological ground and the transformation of relations of power into symbolic relations, articulated in an idiom of good faith (cf. Bourdieu 1977). In this process, the mechanisms of power are masked in order for it to operate (cf. Foucault 1978:86). When harnessed to the administrative structures of the State, this process of mythic seduction ultimately distorts the ideological foundations of the body politic.

Concluding Remarks

In the preceding sections, I have attempted to outline the discursive framework within and against which the people of *Amaya* articulate and reproduce their social and cultural identity. The version of indigenous "history" presented here represents more than just a chronological ordering of the past. Like any construction presented as "history", local narratives conjoin and refract themes of cosmological, ontological and ideological significance and, in this sense, they render culturally meaningful people's experiences of the world. These origin narratives also provide a readily accessible field of possible forms and logic for the articulation of power, the legitimation of identity and the expression of difference.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, local expressions of knowledge do not exist as independent narratives but are influenced by and connected to wider structures. In this respect, local origin narratives also serve to "open up new spaces" (Bruner 1986:152) for the hegemonic practices of the Indonesian State. The State, in this context, is able to empower and legitimate its own order, which is shot through with its own logic of opposition and syncretic symbolism, through its dissimulation within local structures of differentiation and segmentation.[17] In the engulfing practices of nationalism, however disparate social histories and cultural beliefs are often flattened out or distorted to form a unified narrative of political consensus and social experience. What is *different* about local cultures is often objectified and ossified to the point where culture becomes a spectacular procession of simulacra (cf. Baudrillard 1983).

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Notes

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[2] For recent works on the legitimating role of "myth" in "eastern Indonesian" societies see, among others, Fox (1971, 1980); Schulte Nordholt (1971); Hicks (1974); Visser (1984, 1988); Barraud (1985); Pauwels (1985); Traube (1986) and Platenkamp (1988).

[3] While many of the authors of the anthropological literature on so-called "eastern" Indonesian societies have chosen to refer to local accounts of the past as "myths" (for example see Barraud 1985; Hicks 1974; Pauwels 1985; Platenkamp 1988; Schulte Nordholt 1971; Traube 1986; van Wouden 1968; Visser 1984 and 1988) I have elected, for reasons outlined in the text, to speak of these constructions as "historical narratives" (cf. Fox 1979).

[4] The appellation "Eastern Indonesia" is widely used by anthropologists to generally refer to the numerous islands and cultural groups located in the area bounded by the island of Bali in the west and Irian Jaya in the east. The term "Eastern Indonesia" constitutes, I would argue, an arbitrary field of reference and does not correspond with any known culturally or linguistically demarcated area except that constructed, as a matter of convenience and coherence, by western ethnographers. In this situation, to quote Jean Baudrillard, "it is the map that engenders the territory" (1983:2) and not the territory which precedes or survives the map.

[5] For the purposes of clarity and ease of reference, throughout this paper I will italicize words derived from the indigenous language *Vnyola Mayawo*, which is spoken by inhabitants on the western side of the island of Damer (as opposed to the other language spoken on Damer which is confined to the eastern half of the island), and bold italicize both Indonesian and Ambonese-Malay words. A note on orthography and pronunciation, the phoneme *ch* is pronounced as in the gaelic word "loch".

[6] Throughout this paper, I will use a capital "U" to distinguish *Uma* as descent-based social groups from the other signification of the term.

[7] James Fox (1979), in his discussion of Rotinese historical narratives, also points out that similar distinctions are made between various local oral accounts.

[8] In the more detailed version of the narrative, from which this account has been extracted, this part of the narrative is somewhat reminiscent of the story recounted in the Bible concerning Noah's journey in the ark and his eventual arrival on the peak of Mt Ararat. It is not altogether unlikely, given the history of Christian proselytization in the region, that elements of Christian narratives have been incorporated within local accounts. Van Wouden (1968), referring to a Timorese narrative, also suggests that it is possible to ascribe certain aspects of the story to "Christian influences" (*ibid*.:120).

[9] According to one member of *Uma Surlialy*, his ancestors originated from the top of the mountain *Lumtuni* in the centre of the island and are therefore autochthonous. However, according to the version presented by the village orator, *Surlialy* are immigrants and not the original inhabitants of the island as the members of the orator's "house" claim to be.

[10] This paradigm of the enterprising and knowledgeable younger sibling and the subordinate elder sibling is also discussed in the works of Forth (1981), Hoskins (1983), Josselin de Jong, de P.E. (1980), van Wouden (1968), and Visser (1984, 1988), to name but a few. In contrast to this view, McKinnon (1983) and Fox (1989) discuss other situations where the category of "elder" is considered "superior" to that of the "younger".

[11] The "war" referred to here is said by local people to have been waged between the villages located on the western side of Damer and the invaders from Seram. Interestingly, the Dutch naval officer D.H. Kolff (1840:84) reports that one of the villages on the nearby island of Romang [Roma] was forced to relocate further inland as a result of attacks by Seramese "pirates". Some people in *Amaya*, however, have suggested that the phrase "the invaders from Seram" refers to the fact that the invading forces came from the north and were not necessarily from the island of Seram. Other people have suggested that the invading fleet referred to in the narrative belonged to the Majapahit empire.

[12] My understanding of what is meant by ontology is primarily informed by the works of Theodor Adorno (1973) and Bruce Kapferer (1988). According to Kapferer, ontology refers to "those constitutive principles of being that locate and orient human beings within their existential realities" (*ibid*.:220). Furthermore, I would argue (as does Adorno) that these constitutive presuppositions of human subjectivity are linked to the historical setting in which a human being is formed. Such a view of ontology rejects the "essence-mythology" (Adorno 1973:xvi) view of being exemplified in the works

of Heidegger and Buber. For Adorno, the existential philosophy of Heidegger represents a jargon which pretends to make present an idealized form of human subjectivity that is devoid of content and discounts the historical development of human consciousness.

[13] In *Amaya*, the classifications *mahno, uhro* and *ota* are also referred to with the respective Ambonese-Malay terms, **Marna, Bur** and **Stam**. Throughout the region of Maluku Tenggara, similar systems of social classification are invoked by local people with slight variations to the Ambonese-Malay terms employed. In the literature (see de Josselin de Jong 1937; Lebar 1972; and Renes 1977), these terms are respectively glossed as "aristocrats", "commoners" and "slaves". These appellations, I would argue, do not adequately, if they do so at all, convey the meanings and relationships associated with these categories of social identity nor do they take into account the shifting and contextual dimensions of that identity.

[14] In a field census conducted in *Amaya* in late 1986 I recorded 100 people (or approximately 17 per cent of the residential population) whose socially recognized family name was one of the 33 different immigrant family names represented in the village. More than a third (39 or 37 per cent) of the 105 residential dwellings in *Amaya* are associated with and occupied by individuals who are locally regarded as *pendatang* or "immigrants".

[15] In *Amaya*, *adat*, or *hnulcho* as it is known in the vernacular, refers to all beliefs, relations, discourses, practices and classifications which are locally regarded as constitutive of a distinct *Mayawo* cultural identity. Within the context of contemporary Mayawo society, *hnulcho/**adat*** encompasses local expressions of Christianity, local interpretations of State ideology, local translations of the regional economy and local manifestations of population diversity. *Hnulcho* thus represents a synthesis of the historical and the contemporary, the traditional and the novel, the continuous and the transformative aspects of the experienced world. Important here is the realization that *hnulcho/adat* constitutes a particular way of thinking and doing which is regarded by many people in *Amaya*, as the only "natural" way to act (Bourdieu 1977).

[16] The founding principles of the Indonesian Republic referred to as *Panca Sila* delineate the five fundamental aspirations of the Nation-State. They are as follows:

—	***Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa***	"Belief in one God"
—	***Kemanusiaan yang adil dan berab***	"A just and civilized humanity"
—	***Persatuan Indonesia***	"The unity of Indonesia"
—	***Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan***	"Democracy guided by the wisdom generated by social consultation/representation"
—	***Keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia***	"Social justice for all the Indonesian people".

[17] The national motto of Indonesia **Bhinneka Tunggal Ika**, which is commonly glossed as "Unity in Diversity", together with the official emblem of the Republic, which consists of the **Garuda** (the mythical bird carrier of the God Vishnu) and the associated icons of **bintang emas** ("golden star"), **kepala banteng** ("head of a wild buffalo"), **pohon beringin** ("Banyan tree"), **rantai** ("chain") and **setangkai padi, setangkai kapas** ("one stalk of rice, one stalk of cotton"), symbolically express and epitomize both the political anatomy of the Nation and State strategies of encapsulation.