Political Values and Ontological Assemblages

Among the Buid and Makassar in Island Southeast Asia*

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Abstract

This paper compares and contrasts attitudes toward egalitarianism and hierarchy among the Buid of Mindoro, Philippines, with the Makassar of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. These groups were originally chosen precisely because they occupied opposite ends of a continuum of attitudes toward these values within the loosely-integrated region of Island Southeast Asia. The intensification of the slave trade provoked by the European mercantilist expansion in the early modern period led to fundamental transformations in indigenous social formations throughout Southeast Asia. Peoples like the Buid were primarily victims of this trade, while peoples like the Makassar were primarily beneficiaries of it. They came to differ radically from one another in terms of the demographic, spatial, and temporal scales of their life worlds. As a result, they developed contrasting political values relating to hierarchy and egalitarianism; contrasting ritual practices for interacting with metahuman and nonhuman beings; and contrasting degrees of complexity in their ontological frameworks. More generally, the paper argues that the political values, ritual practices, and ontological frameworks encountered at one place and time during anthropological fieldwork should not be analyzed as parts of coherent, self contained 'societies', but as the heterogenous components of a localized assemblage that is in constant internal flux, and that is in constant interaction with encompassing external assemblages.

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Introduction

In this paper, I compare and contrast attitudes toward egalitarianism and hierarchy among the Buid of Mindoro, Philippines, with the Makassar of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. I originally chose to study these two peoples precisely because they occupied opposite ends of a continuum of attitudes toward these values within the loosely-integrated region of Island Southeast Asia. The intensification of the slave trade provoked by the European mercantilist expansion in the early modern period led to fundamental transformations in indigenous social formations throughout Southeast Asia (Reid 1983). Peoples like the Buid were primarily victims of this trade, while peoples like the Makassar were primarily beneficiaries of it. They came to differ radically from one another in terms of the demographic, spatial and temporal scales of their life worlds, their political values, and their ontological relationships to the nonhuman world. These differences did not develop in isolation, but were the result of a dialectical process involving intensive interactions among neighboring social formations (Leach 1954; Scott 2009). It is for this reason that my discussion of the Buid and Makassar is not framed as a comparison between two similar, self-contained wholes. They are unequal parts of the same complex whole that is Island Southeast Asia and played different parts within it.

Demographic, spatial, and temporal scales

I first conducted fieldwork among the Buid of Ayufay in 1979-1981 (Gibson 1986). At that time, there were about six thousand Buid-speakers scattered across southern Mindoro. They practiced an integral system of shifting cultivation in which fresh gardens were opened in the forest each

year primarily for the growing of grain crops such as rice and maize. New houses would be built near the new gardens, while older gardens continued to yield root crops such as sweet potato, taro, yams, and cassava matured for several years, followed by tree crops such as bananas. Traditional settlements consisted of one to three households, each containing no more than four persons, separated from the next cluster of households by one or two kilometers. Spouses had no long-term claims on one another and the frequent divorce and remarriage of adults was an accepted feature of social life. Children shared a wide range of households with their half siblings and step siblings as they grew up. Households occupying the same minor river valley interacted with one another on a daily or weekly basis. Households occupying a region containing about five hundred people interacted on a weekly or monthly basis. A region was defined in opposition to its neighbors through a preference to find marriage partners internally, resulting in a sense that the members of each region constituted a bilateral kindred that shared the same ancestral lands. But in-marrying regions did not constitute corporate groups, nor did households, for that matter, which were in perpetual flux due to divorce.

Following Philippine independence in 1946, large numbers of Christian lowlanders began moving to Mindoro from neighboring islands and settling on Buid ancestral lands. Around 1960, some Buid came to the realization that their traditional dispersed and mobile residence pattern was no longer viable in the face of these incursions. One by one, groups that shared the same river valley began to build larger and more permanent settlements. The Buid that occupied the Ayufay river valley had just decided to build such a settlement in Ugun Liguma when I began my fieldwork in 1979, and it contained about 115 residents. They had also begun to document their land claims by paying an annual tax to the local municipality. Despite these early efforts at claiming recognition

by the state, the Buid of Ayufay only ventured into the lowlands when absolutely necessary, in part because of the ridicule and abuse to which they were subjected by lowland Filipinos. They had no conception of the Philippines as a nation, much less as an entity to which they belonged, and little knowledge of neighboring islands aside from the fact that they were the homelands of the lowland settlers that were invading their ancestral lands.

Buid temporal horizons were similarly limited in scale. It was forbidden to say the names of dead ancestors because this might summon their spirits, who were always hungry for meat. Collective memory stretched back only as far as the memories of the oldest living generation, or the time immediately before the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in 1941-1945. My ethnographic accounts of the Buid tends to portray them as living in a kind of 'ethnographic present', because that is how they portrayed themselves.

At the time of my original fieldwork in South Sulawesi from 1988-1989, there were estimated to be about two million Makassar speakers living in the province. The village of Ara in which I was based had about four thousand residents at any one time. Seventy-five percent of the men were employed as skilled boat builders who were famous throughout the country for the construction of the largest wooden sailing boats with simple hand tools. The origins of this specialized craft were attributed to an era long pre-dating conversion to Islam in the early seventeenth century. The village began to enjoy great prosperity from around 1965 when the boat builders broke free of their dependency on the merchants of the neighboring village of Bira for boat orders and began to build boats all over Indonesia for the highest bidder. In 1988, a thousand or so villagers worked in other parts of Indonesia on a temporary basis but returned regularly to find marriage partners and

conduct life cycle rituals. Much of this new wealth was spent on pilgrimages to Mecca, and Ara became famous for its number of *hajjis*. Specialization in the tools of long-distance trade and membership in a worldwide community of over one billion Muslims gave the villagers of Ara an exceptional broad spatial and demographic horizon.

Economic prosperity also contributed to increasingly elaborate life cycle ceremonies designed to increase the rank of each noble house. Noble houses were corporate groups that included the ancestor spirits and the shrines they inhabited in the attic, the living members of the group that inhabited the middle section, future generations that were associated with the space beneath the house, and long inventories of tangible and intangible assets including lands, regalia, titles, and kinship ties to other houses. In Ara, houses were almost always inherited by the eldest daughter who occupied the central sleeping chamber upon her marriage. Noble rank was documented by genealogies written in a variant of the Gujarati-derived *lontara* script used by the Buid, some of which went back to the fourteenth century. Older villagers were literate in three different scripts: the Gujarati-derived *lontara* script used for recording the deeds of illustrious kings and ancestors; the Arabic script used for religious purposes; and the Roman script used by national schools and bureaucracy. Their temporal horizon was thus quite deep. It is for this reason that my analyses of the Makassar tend to take the form of historical ethnographies. This reflects how they thought about themselves.

Political values and ontological assemblages

Because of these marked differences in demographic, spatial and temporal scale, and because of their partial yet intensive connection to social formations of different scales, the Buid and

Makassar cannot be compared with one another as self-contained, coherent wholes. They are, rather, heterogeneous components of a regional assemblage of diverse social formations ranging from small-scale local communities like the Buid to expansive regional empires like the Makassar (DeLanda 2016). The members of each social formation are well aware that the values and cosmologies of many of their neighbors diverge markedly from their own. These divergences are profound enough to qualify as ontological in nature. The Buid have an animistic ontology in that they experience the world as made up of human, metahuman, and nonhuman beings whose inner consciousness is similar enough to allow for social interaction, but whose outer physical form is different enough that each kind of being perceives the world in a different way (Descola 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Arhem and Sprenger 2016).

Viewed from the inside, Buid ontology is relatively coherent and self-contained. The Buid cultivated their differences from the colonial order in such a way that their egalitarian values were more consistent and extreme than those of many hunter-gatherers (Gibson 1988). Viewed from the outside, the Buid constituted just one component within a larger regional assemblage of diverse social formations. They were similar to many of the indigenous people who were once the focus of anthropological research: small-scale groups that had successfully evaded integration in the colonial social order by refusing to convert to world religions or to submit to coerced or waged labor. These societies developed coherent and self-contained ontologies in order to preserve their autonomy from predatory outsiders. [1]

[1] Descola suggests that there are only four logical possible ontologies and argues that one or the other must be dominant in any one society for reasons having to do with universal features of human cognition (2013: 104-105).

The Makassar have a predominantly analogistic ontology in which all entities in the world are internally and externally both similar and different (Descola 2013: 201-231). As the long-term beneficiaries of a predatory regional system, their attitude toward the outside world is precisely the opposite of the Buid. They have been integrated into long-distance maritime networks for many centuries and have eagerly adopted technologies, ideologies, and political institutions from the entire Indian Ocean. Their cosmology is a sort of bricolage of heterogeneous components drawn from Austronesian animism, Babylonian astrology, Indic tantrism, Greek humoral theory, Ibn Arabi's doctrine of the Unity of Being, and many more. They began to adapt military and political technologies from the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and from the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Their school system has been based on a naturalistic ontology since it was established by the late colonial state a century ago, and villagers are as eager to discuss contemporary geopolitical developments as they are to discuss the relation of the ancestor spirits to Islamic doctrines concerning Judgment Day.

The villagers of Ara were prone to shifting the ontological framework within which they were operating several times a day, or even within a single conversation. This sort of situation is common among the peoples living along the coasts of the Indian Ocean. Michael Lambek has discussed the coexistence of knowledge based on Islamic texts, astrological calculations and spirit possession among the Malagasy speakers on the island of Mayotte off the coast of Madagascar as forms of knowledge that are incommensurable with one another (Lambek 1993). Janet McIntosh has discussed the coexistence of Islamic and indigenous religious practices among the Giriama of coastal Kenya as a case of polyontologism (2009). Similar kinds of ontological complexity have also been described in the Americas. Andean peoples have been engaged with Spanish colonialism

and Catholicism for five hundred years without abandoning their own social relations with the nonhuman beings that animate mountains and other nonhuman bodies. Marisol de la Cadena applies the concept of cosmopolitics to situations in which different participants in a political conflict are operating with radically different ontological assumptions about the world (2010, 2015). Mario Blaser applies the concept of political ontology to a similar kind of conflict between the Innu people of Labrador and the Canadian government over the management of caribou herds (2009, 2016). These authors call on us to pay close attention to all of the beings recognized by the participants in a particular political conflict as relevant political actors, whether they inhabit the bodies of humans or of plants, rivers, mountains or animals; or whether they inhabit no bodies at all, as in the case of spirits, jinn, angels or God.

Where this kind of ontological pluralism exists, I find it useful to view ontologies as emerging from concrete historical assemblages of heterogeneous practices that generate distinctive kinds of subjectivities, objectivities, practices, and knowledges. As individual actors participate in different ontological assemblages in everyday life, they take on different kinds of subjectivity, each of which is associated with a distinctive ontological framework and set of political values. Where a kind of ontological monism exists, as it does among the Buid, I still find it useful to view their ontology as having emerged within a larger set of contrasting ontological assemblages.

Buid political ontology

The documented history of Mindoro dates back to the tenth century, when the island began to serve as a stopover point for Middle Eastern merchants on their way to Japan, followed by Chinese merchants who sailed to the Philippines to acquire goods from local villagers who were part of

trading networks that extended into eastern Indonesia (Majul 1973: 39; Gibson 2005: 47). When the Chinese withdrew from long-distance trade in the fifteenth century, Gujarati merchants took their place. An early version of the Gujarati Nagari script was adapted by the Bugis and Makassar of South Sulawesi, and these adapted scripts then spread into the Philippines (Miller 2016). The Buid and Hanunoo Mangyan of Mindoro continue to use versions of these scripts to this day. In the pre-colonial period, Mindoro thus had prosperous port towns along its coast that were well integrated into a long-distance trading system. Its peoples were far from isolated.

All of this changed when the Spanish decided to establish a permanent colony in the Philippines in 1565. They encountered fortified trading communities with ties to the Sultanate of Brunei on the west coast of Mindoro and in Manila Bay. Identifying these communities as part of the same ‘Moro’ world they had been fighting on the Iberian Peninsula for centuries, they immediately attacked them. The resulting Moro wars lasted for over three hundred years, coming to an end only when the USA replaced the Spanish as the colonial power in 1898.

Small islands like Mindoro lying midway between Manila and Sulu bore the brunt of these wars. The Muslim Sultanates of the southern Philippines came to specialize in raiding the villages of the northern Philippines for slaves, while the Spanish administration imposed forced labor drafts on them to conduct their campaigns against the Moros. Where possible, many Spanish subjects fled to the mountains and joined existing groups of indigenous people (Keesing 1962). On large islands with rugged interiors, such as Luzon and Borneo, indigenous people were able to sustain dense populations by adapting irrigated rice technology to the rugged terrain and to defend their autonomy by cultivating a reputation for ferocity in battle. Social organization in these areas was

relatively hierarchical, if still rather fluid because it was built on the basis of bilateral kindreds rather than corporate descent groups (Acabado et al. 2019). On small islands like Mindoro, indigenous peoples preserved their autonomy by maintaining low population densities and practicing fluidity, dispersion, and ascribed egalitarianism (Gibson and Sillander 2011). In between these two extremes, some populations developed systems of achieved ranking in which individuals competed on an equal basis to gain wealth and renown (Gibson 1990).

By the end of the seventeenth century, the coastal towns of Mindoro were deserted because the local inhabitants either fled to the protection of Spanish forts in Luzon or withdrew into the mountainous interior. The mountain peoples of Mindoro came to be known collectively as the ‘Mangyan’ by lowlanders, although they spoke at least seven different languages. They all developed different ways of life that enabled them to evade capture by Muslim slave raiders from the south and the exaction of forced labor and taxes by Spanish authorities from the north.

By the time I arrived in Mindoro in 1979, the Buid had developed a set of radically egalitarian political values that were defined in opposition to the social order that had come to prevail in the Philippine lowlands. This order was based on the control of the rural population by Spanish-born regular clergy; on landlordism, forced labor, debt peonage and sharecropping; and on violent feuding between rival political families. By contrast, Buid political values were based on a belief that the land belonged to the spirits of the earth, not to humans; on the systematic rejection of dyadic debt obligations between individuals; on the obligation to share speech, food, labor, spouses and children with the community as a whole; and on the peaceful resolution of conflict through collective discussions, not retaliatory violence. Spouses were free to leave each other at any time,

contingent only on the payment of compensation for the emotional distress this caused. Children were not expected to obey the commands of their parents, and parents did not have the right to punish children. A house had to be abandoned whenever someone died in it, because the smell attracted predatory spirits. Ploughing the land offended the spirits of the earth so that only temporary gardens were made. These practices ensured that members of the human community would remain in constant motion through their ancestral domains, and made it very difficult for outsiders to control them.

Buid political values were also defined in opposition to those of their neighbors living in the high mountains to their north, whom the Buid called Bangun, a term that carried derogatory connotations. The Bangun people were considered to be aggressive, uncouth, possessive of their spouses, and the practitioners of black magic. According to Douglas Pennoyer and Christian Rosales, the Taubuid, another group that neighbors the Buid to the north, were indeed ruled by *magurang* or *fufuama*, powerful elders, who possessed the power to kill those who defied them with a curse called *amurit* (Pennoyer 1980; Rosales 2019). These elders were also often shamans, *balianan*, a term for a charismatic intermediary with the spirit world that is widely distributed among the Austronesian languages. The Buid of Ayufay denied that they had any powerful *magurang* or *balianan* like the Bangun.

Buid animism was similar to that found in the Amazon. A human-like interiority was ascribed to a variety of nonhuman beings who nevertheless related to the world differently because they perceived it through different physical bodies. For example, one class of predatory spirits perceived the Buid as pigs and feasted on their corpses when they died. The Buid maintained social

relationships with a wide variety of metahuman beings, including the spirits of their own ancestors; seductive spirits that lived in mountain peaks and resembled the Hanunoo Mangyan; savage spirits that lived in the deep forest and resembled the Bangun; and cannibalistic spirits that resembled lowland Filipinos. They also interacted with nonhuman spirits that resembled domesticated and wild animals; spirits that inhabited rivers, forests, mountains, the sky, and the earth; and spirit familiars who enabled to see otherwise invisible beings (Gibson 1986).

A Buid person was made up of a physical body (*abilugan*), a soul that is closely attached to the body (*falad*), and a mind that existed in a state of intersubjective communication with other minds (*fangayufan*). The soul was the source of emotions and desires, and was located in the center of the torso. When a person died, their body was consumed by predatory spirits, their mind dissipated, and only their soul went to reside in the Under World. Life in the Under World was much like life in the Middle World, except for the absence of the domesticated chickens and pigs that are used in animal sacrifices. The souls of the dead were said to be always hungry for meat, which they could only obtain from their blood relatives. They continually pestered the living to sacrifice an animal to share with them, and could cause serious illness if they were put off for too long.

Children were born with a soul, but their minds developed only gradually as they acquired the power of speech, *tultul*. They were thus unable to properly regulate their emotions, which often resulted in tantrums that adults studiously ignored. The adult mind was a product of social interaction through speech, while the soul was the product of the biological processes of procreation and birth. Ideally, the mind regulated the emotions arising from the soul and ensured they did not disrupt social harmony. Disruptive emotions were most likely to get the better of

adults when they were abandoned by their spouse. Abandoned spouses were entitled to demand an appropriate amount of compensation for their feelings. The amount demanded tended to be unreasonably large at the outset, but over a period of weeks or months, the aggrieved party was gradually persuaded by the community to reduce their demand to what was a fairly standard amount. The community intervened to resolve marital disputes because social conflict was offensive to the spirits of the earth. They withdrew their protection from the whole community until a conflict was resolved, leaving everyone vulnerable to attack by predatory spirits. Once a settlement was reached, the community performed an animal sacrifice to invite the spirits of the earth to rejoin the human community.

While animals were sacrificed for many different reasons, they all had in common a strict rule governing the sharing of the meat. The whole animal had to be chopped into small pieces, and a portion of every part of the animal's body placed in equal piles for every member of the local community. Age, gender, and kinship ties between the sponsor of the sacrifice and the recipient were irrelevant. Everyone received an exactly equal amount of meat. The political effect of these beliefs and practices was to provide every member of the human community with a stake in ensuring that disputes between individuals did not develop into persistent factional conflicts. Individuals retained their right to demand whatever compensation they thought was appropriate and the responsibility to bring their own emotions under control.

Human relationships with the spirits of the earth were mediated by the *lai*, spirit familiars who enabled Buid shamans to perceive the normally invisible beings with whom humans share the world. All adult men and many adult women gradually acquired the ability to enter a light trance

and to view normally invisible beings by participating in collective séances. Male novices described the early stages of this process as learning how to see the spirits by looking over the shoulder of a master shaman. Women who learned to see the spirits did so simply through their long association with men who are powerful shamans, not through a deliberate apprenticeship.

Spirit familiars resided alongside the spirits of the earth at the portals of the cosmos, where the sun and moon passed from the Under World to the Upper World and back again each day. During large-scale séances, all the participants gradually came to perceive exactly the same spirits and their activities. This created an uncanny sense of the objective reality of the normally invisible world. This was an egalitarian way of legitimating the reality of nonvisible beings, because it did not rely on faith in the claimed experiences of charismatic individuals as is common in human communities that rely on shamanism to interact with the nonhuman world.

The spirits of the earth were the source of all life and fertility, which ascended through the food chain from the earth up through plants, animals, humans, and predatory spirits. This was a cosmological hierarchy of a sort, but it was inverted in the sense that the higher up the food chain one went, the less moral were the beings. The spirits of the earth gave life to plants without any expectation of return. Animals ate plants without causing them suffering. Humans killed their domesticated animals under controlled conditions in order to share them with both the human and nonhuman community. Predatory spirits killed indiscriminately simply to feed their selfish appetites (Gibson 1986: 186-187). Cosmological hierarchy served as the basis for political equality as all humans confronted a hostile cosmos together.

During the forty years that have passed since my first visit, the Buid have organized themselves politically on an ever-larger scale to acquire recognition from the national government of their collective rights to their entire ancestral domain. As they have reshaped their practices regarding permanent settlements and land rights, the Buid have continued to reject hierarchy, debt and violence as legitimate political values. Very few have converted to Protestant Christianity or Roman Catholicism. What has changed is that the Buid have created a political system that is intelligible to the members of the lowland world, including political officials such as *consehal* for the head of a local community, and mayor for the political leader of all the Buid. Lowlanders continue to show these leaders greater deference, however, than do the Buid themselves. They regard these political leaders as similar to the shamans: experts at negotiating with powerful forces that lie outside the bounds of the moral community and at holding them at bay (Gibson 2015).

Makassar political ontology

The historical experience of the Makassar people was radically different from that of the Buid. They started out with the denser population made possible by wet-rice farming and a hierarchical social structure ruled by powerful kings. During the sixteenth century, the rulers of the most powerful Makassar kingdom welcomed Malay merchants fleeing the Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1512, and developed new naval and military technologies that enabled them to conquer all of South Sulawesi. In 1605, the king of Gowa converted to Islam and joined other Muslim rulers in a commonwealth that stretched right across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and North Africa. Subsequent rulers of Gowa conquered all of South Sulawesi and then launched naval expeditions to subordinate local kingdoms throughout Eastern Indonesia. They extracted heavy tribute payments from defeated rivals that included large numbers of slaves. Some of these slaves

were used domestically as household servants, agricultural workers, and collectors of forest products for trade; and some were sold to the Dutch United East India Company (VOC), which had a voracious appetite for slaves.

The Sultanate of Gowa dominated the maritime slave trade from the 1590s until 1667, when it was defeated by the VOC (Gibson 2005: 152-156). The VOC then dominated the trade until its operations were disrupted by political conflicts in Europe between 1780 and 1816, at which point the Sultanate of Sulu in the southern Philippines served as the center of the slave trade until the 1870s, when the use of steamships finally enabled the Dutch and the Spanish to defeat local 'pirates' (Gibson 2007: 86-90; Warren 1981).

Traditional Makassar ontology was predominantly analogistic in the sense defined by Descola (2013: 201-231). That is, the world was perceived as made up of an infinite variety of entities that differed from one another both internally and externally, but which could nevertheless be mapped on to one another through a vast network of shared attributes and organized into a cosmic hierarchy, or 'great chain of being' (Lovejoy 1971). These analogies were drawn from bits and pieces of symbolic traditions encompassing the entire eastern hemisphere. They employed this symbolic assemblage to determine auspicious days for various undertakings; to prepare amulets for healing, love, and war; to achieve altered states of consciousness; and to settle legal disputes according to religious law.

These forms of analogism originally developed in distant parts of the eastern hemisphere coexisted both with local forms of Austronesian analogism and newer forms of modern naturalism. Makassar

villagers continued to employ an Austronesian ontological assemblage to converse in with the royal ancestors and to conduct the rituals that reproduced the hierarchy of noble houses, both of which once legitimated indigenous the form of kingship. They employed the Islamic ontological assemblage to achieve individual salvation; to cure specific physical and psychological disorders; to organize the individual life cycle; and to interact with metahumans like prophets and *wali* who might intercede with God; all of which once legitimated the rule of Islamic kings who claimed to be the axis of the world. They employed the naturalistic ontology they acquired in school to acquire salaried employment, to deal with the government bureaucracy, and to engage in electoral politics. These projects all served to legitimate the developmental projects of the nation state.

Analogistic ontology and Austronesian kingship

In the analogistic ontology of the Makassar, every human subject was born as a member of a set of seven siblings, each of which had a distinct spiritual interior and physical exterior associated with different aspects of the cosmos. These spiritual siblings were embodied respectively in the blood of childbirth, the amniotic fluid, the caul, the umbilical cord, the placenta, the breath, and the flesh. The blood was gathered in bamboo leaves and place outside in a basket open to the sky to receive the blessings of the Upper World. The amniotic fluid was allowed to seep through the floorboards into the earth beneath the house, ensuring that wherever the newborn traveled it would return to its origin at death. The umbilical cord was dried and stored near the central pillar of the house where the house spirit resided. The placenta was preserved in a coconut husk in the attic, thus mapping these aspects of each inhabitant onto the structure of the house, which was in turn a map of the cosmos.

The breath, *nyaha*, was the main locus of individual consciousness, and left the body periodically to inhabit the placenta in the attic/Upper World, or to move about the Middle World during dreams. When the breath left the body permanently at death, the body began to decay. The *nyaha* was then transformed into a disembodied spirit called an *anja*, which retained many of the idiosyncrasies and habits that an individual exhibited during life. Three or four generations after its death, when none of its living descendants remembered its personality while alive, the *anja* became an *alusu*, a subtle being that served as a generalized ancestor spirit. The ancestor spirit was then ready to return to the house and take up residence in an attic shrine above the central bedchamber, which was occupied by a married couple of reproductive age. In Ara, houses were inherited by the oldest daughter as soon as she consummated her marriage. After four generations, an aspect of the ancestor spirit descended into the womb of this female descendent and was reincarnated in the body of its great grandchild, completing a cycle that lasted about one hundred years.

The Austronesian person was thus defined by the place of its body within a womb it shared with its spiritual siblings and with a series of older and younger human siblings born from the same mother. The womb was a microcosm of the shared space of the house, which was structured as a model of a cosmos composed of an Upper, Middle, and Lower World (Gibson 1995, 2019). Each house was also defined by its place within the hierarchy of noble houses within a particular realm. Throughout South Sulawesi, the social hierarchy was anchored by the relationship of each noble house to the founding royal ancestor of the local realm.

Makassar dynasties traced their origins back to a divine female being who descended inside a bamboo internode from the Upper World to the Middle World, coming to rest on a flat stone

located in the center of a human community. The princess was then discovered by a prince who had sailed inside a boat from a distant overseas empire, often identified as the Javanese Empire of Majapahit. They were immediately drawn together into a unity that instantiated the cosmic complementary opposition that existed between male and female principles. The ordinary human beings living in the vicinity soon encountered this extraordinary pair of beings. These humans had been living in a state of anarchy with no way of resolving their disputes. They approached the divine couple and asked them to serve as their political rulers and as a source of heavenly blessing in return for material support and homage. The beings agreed and a mutual oath was sworn between them. The beings remained on earth long enough to leave behind heirs before ascending into the heavens. They also left behind them a set of sacred objects imbued with their vitality called *gaukang*, things of power, into which their spirits could descend on ritual occasions to receive the homage of their earthly subjects. These objects were stored in the attic of the current ruler's house and were both the sign and source of his authority. Every time a new ruler took office, this myth was reenacted. The candidate for kingship stood on the *palantikan*, a flat stone in the middle of the realm representing where the heavenly princess descended, and swore the same mutual oath as his ancestor had with the members of the royal council, who represented the common people.

The myth of the founding royal ancestors was also reenacted during every life cycle ritual held for a member of a noble house. Only members of the royal and noble classes whose bodies contained a sufficient proportion of 'white' blood were entitled to set up bamboo devices to absorb divine blessings following a birth, to decorate their houses with bamboo during weddings, and to be carried on a bamboo bier to the graveyard. In a sense, life-time attendance at these elaborate rituals constituted a sort of apprenticeship in feudal hierarchy, an embodied conviction that everyone in

society was entitled to a different place in the ranking system because of the specific physical and spiritual qualities ascribed to them at birth.

Because a person's rank was half way between that of their father and their mother, and because men of the highest rank took several wives who were born of different ranks, there was always ambiguity about exactly where one stood. There was intense competition among men who occupied the same place in the hierarchy to outdo one another. This was not a matter of egalitarian values among peers, but of an endless attempt to acquire greater power, wealth, and knowledge, and to convert them into a higher ascribed social rank for their children by marrying a woman of a higher ascribed rank than they would otherwise be entitled to. The pursuit of strategic marriage alliances fueled both social and political life among the Makassar. The wedding rituals that validated a man's claims to high rank were by far the most elaborate and expensive of life cycle rituals.

The structure of the Indic kingdoms that arose around the Java Sea in the pre-Islamic period can be pictured as a set of concentric social, political and cosmological hierarchies that reinforced one another. The social hierarchy was centered on a royal house which defined the rank of every noble house according to how recently they could establish decent from a ruler. The political hierarchy was centered on the royal house through king's control of long-distance trade and command of superior military forces. The cosmological hierarchy was centered on the royal court through the ruler's descent from the founding royal ancestor; its possession of the sacred regalia left behind by the royal ancestor; and its control of the androgynous priests who served as intermediaries with the royal ancestor spirits. These three hierarchies gradually became decentered due to the

conversion of the royal court to the Islamic religion, which was centered in Mecca, followed by the imposition of political and economic hegemony by the Dutch East India Company.

Analogistic ontology and Islamic kingship

The ethical individualism of the prophetic religions developed in dialectical opposition to the political hierarchy of the imperial centers (Weber 1963: 126). The religions founded by Jesus and Muhammad were originally populist as well, in that they were oriented toward the urban middle strata of merchants and craftsmen and assumed that most people could achieve salvation by putting their faith in a merciful God and following a simple set of moral rules. In relation to the universal, all-powerful and all-merciful God of Islam, all humans were equal and knew they would be equally held to account for their acts as individuals on Judgment Day whatever their earthly status had been during life. As Christianity and Islam expanded into the Hellenistic centers of power, however, this populism came under pressure from elite intellectuals who attempted to reconcile the teachings of the prophets with the rationalistic and hierarchical vision of the cosmos developed by Greek philosophers. In these hybrid versions of the prophetic religions, some individuals were seen as closer to God than others due to their exceptional mystical intuition; as more capable of perceiving the nature of the cosmos in purely rational terms due to their superior intellect; or as authorized to issue definitive interpretations of doctrine due to their high religious office (Hodgson 1977).

In Islam, the synthesis of elite reason and populist revelation culminated in the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the Unity of Being developed by Ibn Arabi (1165–1240). According to this doctrine, the phenomenal world was but the lowest level of a series of emanations from the Godhead, and it

was the destiny of human to re-ascend these levels and merge back into the absolute being of God. The one who was able to achieve perfect knowledge of and love for the Creator was *al-Insan al-Kamil*, the Perfect Man. God had created the cosmos in the first place so that He might not be alone, but would have a Perfect Man who could come to know Him and to freely love Him. Ibn Arabi's writings were elaborated by later authors into a variety of cosmological systems. By the seventeenth century, it was widely accepted in Southeast Asia that the cosmos was composed of Seven Grades of Being that emanated from the absolute unicity of the Godhead, and ended in the phenomenal world of human experience (Braginsky 1990).

When the Portuguese seized the Muslim port of Melaka in 1512, Malay-speaking Muslims were given refuge by the ruler of Gowa in South Sulawesi. For almost a century, the kings of Gowa played the Portuguese off against the Muslim sultanates of region in order to acquire new military and political technologies, including gunpowder weapons. These technologies enabled them to capture slaves who could be set to work to grow the crops needed feed their soldiers, in a positive feedback loop. By 1590, they had conquered all of South Sulawesi (Gibson 2005: chapter 7). In 1605, the rulers of Gowa converted to a version of Islam that had developed in Iran, Mughal India, Java, and Aceh during the sixteenth century. The rulers of these Gunpowder Empires claimed the status of Ibn Arabi's Perfect Man for themselves (Gibson 2007: chapter 2). The rulers of Gowa were thus able to convert to Islam without losing their status as the head of the social, political, cosmological and religious hierarchies, at least for a time.

After the conversion of their rulers to Islam, growing numbers of Southeast Asians began crossing the Indian Ocean to trade, study, and perform the *hajj*. There they encountered far more egalitarian

versions of Islam in which the legal system was controlled by *ulama*, religious charisma was controlled by ascetic mystics, and political rulers were often little better than local warlords. These more egalitarian versions of Islam gained ground in Southeast Asia as the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) humbled one local Sultanate after another during the seventeenth century.

The Makassar Empire of Gowa was defeated in a series of campaigns between 1660 and 1677 in which the VOC was allied with its traditional rival, the Bugis kingdom of Bone. The village of Ara, formerly a vassal of Gowa, was ceded to the VOC by the Treaty of Bungaya in 1667. It was thus technically under Dutch authority for almost three hundred years, although the VOC was content to rule the village indirectly and leave the local system of hereditary rulers and Islamic judges in place. With political power in the hands of foreigners, religious authority also left the royal courts and attached itself to charismatic Sufi masters and learned *ulama* with ties to the global center of the religion in the Hejaz. By 1800, the political, religious, and social hierarchies were centered on Dutch Batavia, Islamic Mecca, and the local royal court, respectively.

Islamic cosmology in Ara

In traditional Islam, the acquisition of religious knowledge was modeled on the way an apprentice learned a specialized skill; the skill had to be incorporated into one's body through prolonged practice under a master, whose oral commentary served to ensure that the skill was internalized correctly. If he wanted to learn a particular religious scripture, a pupil had find a master that had received a certificate from an previous master stating he was authorized to teach it. The student had to commit each text to memory, writing out each passage only as an aide to this process. Once a passage was memorized, the *'alim* provided an oral commentary to ensure the student understood

the correct the inner meaning (Messick 1992). All Muslims had to memorize a minimum set of Quranic verses in order to perform the obligatory daily prayers. Memorizing the entire Quran required special techniques; those who succeeded were accorded great respect (Gade 2004). In the case of mysticism, a novice had to practice a series of ascetic disciplines that were designed to induce altered states of consciousness. The proper interpretation of these experiences was supplied through the oral commentary of a *sheikh* lest the novice be misled. This model of master-pupil apprenticeship meant that those who wished to achieve the highest levels of religious knowledge had to travel across the Islamic world to sit at the feet of recognized legal scholars and Sufi *sheikhs*.

In Ara, my informants were in agreement that knowledge of God himself required a four-stage process: obedience to the outward forms of religion as contained in the scriptures, *sharia*; the practice of ascetic discipline to achieve an altered state of inner consciousness, *tarekat*; the attainment of a direct intuition of ultimate reality, *hakekat*; and finally losing all sense of oneself as separate from the Godhead, *marifat* (compare Geertz 1960:183). According to hagiographies that were familiar to everyone in the village, the most accomplished *sheikh*s were able to die and return to life as often as needed, to instantaneously move from one point in space to another, no matter how distant. Their tombs thus served as portals to divine blessings (*berkat*) and charisma (*karama'*) could flow. They were frequently visited by those desiring to make a vow in exchange for a divine favor such as the curing of an illness or infertility.

In the village of Ara, accomplished mystics were generally referred to by the term *wali*, short for *wali Allah*, 'intimate friend of God'. Several *wali* told me that they could converse with nonhuman beings such as *jinn*, and with the spirits of deceased *wali*. In order to contact these beings, they

practiced austerities on mountain tops, in mosques, at the tombs of dead *wali*, or simply in their own homes. When they achieved an altered state of consciousness, they were able to see and converse with normally invisible creatures, *makhluk ghaib*. This state of consciousness was quite unlike the trance state of the spirit mediums: their consciousness was heightened, not obliterated, and they remained in control of their bodies. It was from these unseen beings that they claimed to derive their esoteric knowledge, *ilmu ghaib*, that enabled them to become impervious to blades and bullets; to suspend the laws of space, time and gravity; and cure illnesses. One method of curing a patient was for the *wali* to ascend the Grades of Being to a level on which the phenomenal difference between the bodies of the *wali* of the patient collapsed. The *wali* could the use his *ilmu* to cure this unified body, and so cure in the patient.

While only a small number of elite mystics were able to deliberately traverse the Grades of Being, over time this cosmology became embedded in the life cycle of ordinary Muslims in South Sulawesi. According to Sufi mystical texts that served as a guide to life cycle rituals in Ara, the eternal soul existed in a state of union with the Godhead in pre-eternity and was implanted in the developing embryo only on the fortieth day after conception. This soul was sometimes referred to by the Arabic term *roh*, but more commonly by the Makassar term for breath, *nyaha*. According to a Naqshbandi Sufi text given to me by one villager, the soul engages in a long dialogue with God before it can be persuaded to separate from Him and descend through the Seven Grades of Being to become manifest in the material world. The soul agrees to do so only once it has received assurances that the phenomenal world will be filled with signs that will guide it back to union with the Godhead after it leaves its body at death.

The words for childbirth in Indonesian, *lahir*, and Makassar, *lahere'*, are derived from the Arabic *zahir*, the outer visible world, which is defined in opposition to the inner invisible world, *batin*, thus corresponding precisely to Decola's opposition between exteriority and interiority (Brakel 1979: 77-79). Humans share the capacity for reason, *akal*, with the angels, who have no bodies and therefore no desires; and the capacity for desire with animals, *nafsu*, who have no reason and therefore cannot sin. Humans must exercise their reason to regulate their desires according to the divine law as laid down in the Qur'an and *sunnah*. Reason develops with age, and it was believed to be stronger in men than in women and children, who are more prone to be governed by their desires. The male head of a household must thus help govern the desires of all its members.[2]

The first step in the incorporation of a new born into the community of the faithful was taken between three and seven days after birth when the umbilical cord falls off. This ritual marked the release of the mother from a number of restrictions, including a prohibition on leaving the house. In Ara, this was often combined with the Islamic ritual of *hakekah* (Arabic *'aqiqa*). In much of Indonesia this involved first cutting of a child's hair, but in Ara a week-old child was considered too young for this and the *hakekah* was limited to the sacrifice of a goat on the child's behalf. The *hakekah* was conducted by the local Imam, who was invited to sacrifice the goat and then to recite Islamic prayers while holding the child facing Mecca. He then left and his place was taken by the female midwife who set out an elaborate array of foods designed to fortify the child's life force, *sumanga*, and to prepare it for contact with the earth. Herbal medicines were applied to seal the fontanel and navel. When the midwife was finished, a number of other women invited for the purpose took turns applying medicine to mother and child. These women were selected from the

[2] For similar ideas elsewhere in Southeast Asia, see Siegel 1969, Bowen 1993, Peletz 1996.

very periphery of the kinship circle, from categories such as affines (*ipar*) or affines of affines (*lago*) of the same generation as the mother. The completion of a child's separation from its mother's body was thus accompanied by its incorporation into a wider community of her peers, who represented the still wider community of the Muslims, the *umma*.

A person was accompanied through life by the angels of the Four Sides. The angel on the right recorded one's good deeds, the angel on the left one's evil deeds. One angel accompanied a person in the front and another in the back to protect them from malign beings. A person was also accompanied through life by a white shadow and a black shadow. The white shadow was a manifestation of the divine aspect of the self, representing one's true essence, *hakiki*, and was associated with the angels of the four sides and with a person's reason. The black shadow was a manifestation of the individual's appetites and was associated with their bodily desires. The black shadow could be cultivated through certain rituals to provide a person with magical powers, but because they were used in the service of selfish desires these powers lead the practitioner into evil deeds (compare Bowen 1987: 125). Illness occurred when the balance among the Seven Siblings, the Four Sides, and the White and Black Shadows was upset for some reason. A ritual specialist would then lay out a display containing white, red, and black rice and bid the patient to eat from the display in the dark. If the white rice was eaten, it meant that the angels of the Four Sides were hungry; if the black rice was eaten, it meant that Black Shadow was hungry; and if the red rice was eaten, it meant that the Seven Siblings were hungry. Appropriate measures could then be taken to restore the balance among them.

The soul departed the body permanently at death. When the body was washed, it was placed directly on the bare legs of ten kinsmen and affines of the deceased person who were of the same gender. The genitals were washed by the most closely related mourner, such as a parent or child. The central part of the body was washed by the next most closely related kinsmen, such as aunts or uncles. The head and feet were washed by the same categories of peripheral relatives who applied medicines to the infant after birth. Biological birth and death were thus followed by collective rituals that asserted the moral claims of the wider religious community over each individual and their immediate kin.

The permanent departure of the soul from its body came as a shock that it only gradually overcame. For seven days the soul kept trying to return to the house or to reenter the corpse in grave. Rituals were performed to help it on its way to the afterlife on the third, seventh, and fortieth days after the death, at which point the mourners were able to stop following a variety of restrictions. While they awaited Judgment Day, souls were not subject to the passage of time but remained ever present to those living in the temporal world. It was thus possible for the living to interact with the dead on an on-going basis. The living attempted to ease the suffering of the dead by sponsoring various rituals; the dead attempted to secure blessing for the living by interceding with God. The ultimate fate of the soul would only be revealed on Judgment Day, when the balance between its good and evil deeds would determine whether it is rewarded in paradise or punished in hell. The social rank it held during life was irrelevant to this outcome.

Late colonialism, naturalistic ontology, and Indonesian nationalism

The VOC was bankrupted by the Napoleonic Wars and collapsed in 1800. It was replaced by the Government of the Netherlands East Indies, which gradually imposed direct rule throughout Indonesia in a series of campaigns between 1816 and 1910. The people of Ara only interacting with Dutch officials on a sustained basis between 1910 and 1941, when the Japanese occupied Indonesia, and from 1946-1949, when the Dutch attempted to reestablish their authority. This period of late colonialism saw the introduction of a new assemblage of information technologies such as schools, newspapers, and broadcast media; political technologies such as governmental bureaucracies; and economic technologies such as factory production and mass consumption. These technologies tended to undermine both the autonomy of traditional merchants and artisans and the dependency of the peasantry on feudal landlords. They gave rise to a new kind of subjectivity based on competitive individualism, and a new conception of sovereignty based on religious nationalism. A government bureaucracy staffed by foreigners at the top and local commoners at the bottom created a new crisis of legitimacy that extended beyond the royal courts to the Islamic religion itself. Even in the areas that remained technically under the authority of indigenous rulers through a policy of indirect rule, it became increasingly clear that the local king was at best a salaried servant of the colonial state and he lost whatever political authority he once had.

Meanwhile the balance of religious authority began to shift from the elitist form of Islamic mysticism outlined above to the more populistic form of religious authority that was based on the interpretation of the religious scriptures by middle class *ulama*. Islamic scripturalism received a

decisive boost from the introduction of new information technologies by the colonial bureaucracies. Francis Robinson has shown that print technology was resisted as a medium for communicating religious knowledge throughout the Islamic world for centuries after it became available. By the 1870s, thousands of books were being produced each year in centers of religious learning such as Delhi, Lucknow, and Deoband to feed the growing market of literate Muslims (Robinson 2000). Scriptures that were once only available in expensive manuscript form now became accessible to a far larger audience in the form of printed books.

A second innovation was the introduction of new forms of mass education in a standardized vernacular. When dealing with native subordinates throughout the colony, the Dutch administration employed a simplified version of the Malay language written in Latin script. This language later formed the basis of the national language of post-colonial Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia. The bureaucracy of the late colonial state grew so rapidly that local schools were set up to train a class of native bureaucrats. Members of this educated class were soon exposed to the anti-colonial nationalist movements developing throughout Asia and Africa during this period, and many of them came under the influence of religious modernizers in the Middle East, such as the founders of the Deobandi madrassa in British India, who introduced a standardized, graded curriculum modeled on Christian mission schools for the study of religion in 1867 and Muhammad Abduh, who modernized religious education in Egypt in the 1890s (Metcalf 1982; Starrett 1998). In the short run, the tremendous expansion of literacy and book production enhanced the power and influence of the *ulama* who oversaw their production. In the long run, however, mass education and mass communications tended to marginalize the traditional clergy, and in the next phase of history it was lay devotees who took over the task of religious reform.

In Indonesia, modernist Muslims played a central role in the campaign for national independence, especially in the 'outer islands' of Sumatra and Sulawesi. Islamic nationalism reached a peak in South Sulawesi during the Darul Islam rebellion of 1950-1965, when large areas of the countryside came under the control of a radical movement seeking to establish Indonesia as an Islamic state governed by a codified version of shariah law. Militants attempted to impose a coherent set of doctrines and ritual practices in the areas they controlled. Their ideology was based on an egalitarian interpretation of religious law and a modernist view of human subject as equal individuals who were subject only to Allah. In Ara, they destroyed the tomb of the village *wali Allah* and prohibited the visitation of sacred sites. Interaction with any metahuman being other than Allah was regarded as a form of *syirk*, polytheism, or *bidah*, deviant innovation. They also launched a fierce attack on all 'feudal' rituals that perpetuated the hierarchical ranking of noble houses. They forced the cult of the royal ancestors underground.

The affirmation of the absolute equality of all men in the sight of Allah came at the cost of the marginalization of women. Darul Islam militants enforced a rigid interpretation of *shariah* law that emphasized the authority of fathers and husbands over their daughters and wives and the seclusion of women from the public sphere. Noble women in particular lost a great deal of power and autonomy as they had come to control the rituals and myths relating to the pre-Islamic royal ancestors, which had developed a complementary relationship with the male-dominated practice of Islamic mysticism during the nineteenth century.

The effort of the Darul Islam militants to achieve ideological and ontological coherence did not last long. After eliminating the Communist Party through the massacres of 1965-1966, the Suharto regime repressed political Islam for the next thirty years. Once the central government regained control in Ara, practices based on rival ontologies soon reemerged and were in a rough balance at the time of my fieldwork in 1988-1989. Modernist forms of Islamic law continued to be advocated by schoolteachers and other salaried civil servants, but only in private. Sufi mystics continued to visit the tombs of illustrious *wali Allah.* Androgynous shamans continued to interact with the spirits of royal ancestors, albeit behind closed doors.

The older inhabitants of Ara were familiar with all of these practices and were able to glide from one set of ontological presuppositions about the world to another without difficulty, despite their apparent incommensurability. As I noted above, this sort of polyontological engagement with a plurality of worlds has been described in many other Muslim societies lying along the long-distance trade routes of the Indian Ocean (Lambek 1993, McIntosh 2009). How long it will last in the rapidly urbanizing and modernizing society of post-Suharto Indonesia is an open question: modernist Islam has exercised a growing influence in the nation ever since the restoration of democratic elections in 1998.

Conclusion

The Buid and Makassar make distinctions between material and spiritual beings at the level of epistemology as well as that of ontology. Knowledge of material beings is acquired more or less the same way by all humans through physical interaction with an assemblage that includes bodily senses, instruments, and embodied subjects (Lakoff 1987, Bloch 1998). Buid acquired their

practical knowledge of horticulture and their encyclopedic knowledge of the plant world informally by participating in the activities of adults in the same manner as the neighboring Hanunoo studied by Harold Conklin (1956). The Makassar men of Ara acquired their knowledge of boat building through a long period of apprenticeship to a master craftsman. The conceptual knowledge and practical techniques employed in horticulture and carpentry were relatively accessible to the outsider, as were most everyday forms of social interaction within the human community.

The situation was very different for the esoteric knowledge of metaphysical entities such as souls, ancestors, and nonhuman spirits. Buid shamans and Makassar mystics acquired their knowledge of the spirit world through an apprenticeship in bodily disciplines that enabled them to achieve altered states of consciousness. Because these altered states focused awareness on inner experiences, they were relatively inaccessible to outsiders. Among the Buid, virtually every adult man was able to access the spirit world by joining in collective seances. Among the Makassar, access to the spirit world was confined to a hierarchy of mystical adepts who owed their abilities to a combination of descent from powerful ancestors and their own efforts. They claimed a type of authority that was complementary to that of the holders of political office.

Differences in the way esoteric knowledge is acquired has significant consequences for the way power and authority is exercised in a social formation. Among the Buid, it is the existence of a cosmological hierarchy accessible to all adult men that makes their radically egalitarian political system possible. Buid political ontology included interactions with a variety of human beings, ranging from predatory lowlanders to uncouth indigenous people from the central mountains; with

metahuman beings such as ancestors, *andagaw* and *taw gubat*; and with nonhuman beings such as malevolent animal spirits and benevolent earth spirits. The Buid are best thought of as similar to a rather beleaguered intentional community whose members were attempting to live according to a set of values based on personal autonomy, sharing, ascribed equality, and nonviolence while surrounded on all sides by aggressive humans, metahumans, and nonhumans who occupied different levels of a hierarchically structured cosmos. I view them as pursuing an unusually pure form of egalitarianism precisely because it was developed in systematic opposition to the kind of hierarchical political ontology characteristic of most lowland peoples in Southeast Asia, including both Christian Filipinos and Muslim Makassar.

Among the Makassar, the social, political, and cosmological hierarchies that were generated in distinct domains serve to reinforce one another, but were all relativized by the existence of an all-powerful and all-merciful creator God before whom all humans are equal. Makassar political ontology was based on an ascribed social hierarchy in which no two people were born equal; an ascribed cosmological hierarchy composed of a great chain of human, metahuman, and nonhuman subjects; an achieved religious hierarchy in which some were recognized for their superior piety and mystical knowledge; an ascribed religious egalitarianism based on universal submission to a transcendent God; an ascribed political egalitarianism based on citizenship within a sovereign nation state; and an achieved political hierarchy based on competitive examinations and bureaucratic office. In this ethnographic case, it makes no sense to attribute a single 'ontology' to any individual or to a social whole. The Makassar social formation is best thought of as a complex assemblage of ontological assemblages in which social actors are continually adopting different modes of subjectivity to interact with different kinds of embodied others on a basis of relative

equality and hierarchy. The number and complexity of their emic categories for different aspects of human subjectivity show just how sophisticated and heterogeneous their understanding of subjectivity is.[3]

In conclusion, it will be seen that the concept of ascribed equality is present among both the Buid and Makassar. For the Buid, it lies at the very heart of what it means to be an ethical human being: no human has the right to command another, to control who they associate with, or to enforce payment of a debt. These sorts of behavior are understood as characteristic of uncultured Bangun, violent lowlanders, or predatory spirits. For the Makassar, the concept of ascribed equality also lies at the heart of what it means to be an ethical human being: all human souls will one day be judged by Allah as equals for their deeds, without regard to the position they occupied in the social, political, or religious hierarchies during life. The difference lies in the fact that the Buid represent a rare example of 'actually existing egalitarianism' by relegating hierarchy to the transcendental domain, while the Makassar represent a much more typical case of 'actually existing hierarchy' by relegating egalitarianism to the transcendental domain. We cannot characterize the Buid as living in an 'egalitarian society' and the Makassar as living in a 'hierarchical society'. They operate within ontological assemblages in which egalitarian and hierarchical values play particular

[3] Marshall Sahlins has recently argued that even the most egalitarian hunter-gatherers see themselves as the subordinate members of a cosmic hierarchy in which humans are subject to 'hegemonic metapersons' who hold the power of life and death over them (Sahlins 2015). In his eyes, the institution of human kingship does not constitute a fundamental transformation of the human condition, but simply another manifestation of a universal human state of subordination to superior powers (Sahlins 2017). While I agree that nonhuman beings must be treated as an integral part of the political order, I do not agree that this means that all social formations are equally hierarchical in the final analysis. The Buid are a case in point.

roles in different domains of experience at a particular point in time, and may come to play a very different roles at another point in time.

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