



## Spatial Arrangement and the Making of Cosmos in Huaulu Society

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### Abstract

This is a study about spatial arrangement and cosmological order of Huaulu society in Seram Island, Eastern Indonesia. Research and data collection had been conducted by ethnography. The problem is derived from Valerio Valeri's works on Huaulu spatial arrangement that is considered unfinished. In Huaulu, there are four basic directions recognizable to its people, namely *rai*, *lau*, *roe*, and *ria*—they can be translated respectively to South, North, East, and West. However, among several meanings associated to them, there is also association with the direction to the interior or mountain, the direction to the sea, the direction to the forest or “outside world”, and the direction to the village or “inside world”, respectively. By positing Huaulu village as point of reference, we can clearly see that the island interior is always situated in the South, whereas the sea is always situated in the North; hence, the translation for *rai* and *lau* is South and North. But, in respect of *roe* and *ria*, their translations are more problematic, since their connotations as “outside” and “inside” donot imply direct relation to East and West. Valeri left this problem unanswered by leaving us a question: why does in some context at Huaulu “outside” stand to “inside” as “East” stand to “West”? By answering this question, this article aims to complete the reconstruction of Huaulu spatial arrangement and cosmological order that had been started—and left unfinished—by Valeri more than three decades ago. The result is a basic geometrical order that underlies Huaulu cosmology.

**Keywords:** Dual Organization, Earth and Heaven, Forest and Village, Gender Distinction, Huaulu, Kitchen and Verandah

## Introduction

Huaulu people live in Seram Island, precisely in the North coast of Central Seram region. Administratively this area is a part of North Seram District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku Province. In late 1970s, Huaulu as well as its culture was introduced to academic milieu of social scientists by Italian anthropologist Valerio Valeri through his several academic writings. Valeri's magnum opus, a monograph entitled *The Forest of Taboos: Morality, Hunting, and Identity among the Huaulu of the Moluccas*, was published posthumously in 2000.<sup>2</sup> This book discusses especially about food taboo in Huaulu, but also examines many other aspects of their culture. Since a long time before *The Forest of Taboos*, Valeri has written a lot of articles and essays about Huaulu. One of them is an article entitled "Parts and Wholes: Social and Conceptual Dualism in the Central Moluccas", originally prepared for a conference in 1983.<sup>3</sup> The article aims to discuss dual organization in Central Maluku, especially in Huaulu and its neighboring communities. However, beside that main topic, the article also contains an important explanation about spatial arrangement and cosmological order in Huaulu as expressed in their architecture and village layout.

Valeri has explained that spatial arrangement of Huaulu village is organized according to dual organization based on gender distinction between male and female.<sup>4</sup> As he described, in house level this arrangement manifested in the separation between the back part of the house (kitchen) as female space and the front part (verandah) as male space; whereas in village level, between the unity of all verandahs and the big yard as male space and the unity of all kitchens and the forest at the outskirt as female space. Spatial arrangement in house level forms polar layout, while in village level forms concentric one, even though both are regulated by dual principle. It is within these two gender categories, male and female, that almost all of other categories in Huaulu's cultural logic are classified: order-disorder, public-private, culture-nature. Therefore, those pairs could be linked with the pair of separated spaces too.

Traditionally, there are four basic directions in Huaulu recognizable to its people, namely *roe*, *ria*, *lau*, and *rai*. Each can be translated, respectively, to East, West, North, and South. In his analysis, Valeri found that the translation of *lau* and *rai* into North and South relatively did not cause any problem. The basic meaning of *lau* is the direction to the sea, while the basic meaning of *rai* is the direction to the island interior or mountain. Considering Huaulu village as frame of reference, the sea (Seram Sea) is always in the North and the mountain (Seram interior) is always in

the South. Because of this fix reference, translating *lau* and *rai* into North and South would never contradict their basic meaning. However, translating *roe* and *ria* into East and West seems to be more problematic and not as easy as the other two's translation. Valeri has recognized that *roe* and *ria* have some connotations other than East and West. If we place *roe* and *ria* in the context of spatial arrangement in village level which is concentric in its nature, their meaning will be linked with "exterior/outside" and "interior/inside", respectively. Thus, the question is, why does in this particular context "outside" stand to "inside" as "East" stand to "West"?<sup>5</sup> Valeri left this question unanswered and recognized his unsuccessfulness in providing explanation to this problem. It is precisely this question that I will try to answer in this paper. This problem is not a mere problem of translation, I would argue. I hope by answering this question, I will complete the reconstruction of Huaulu's original spatial arrangement that had been started more than three decades ago—and then left unfinished—by Valeri with his "Parts and Wholes". Therefore, I consider this paper as a sort of continuation to Valeri's work. It is not aimed to reject Valeri's account; on the contrary, it aims to complete his explanation by answering his inherited question.

I wrote this paper based on my ethnography whose fieldwork I conducted in Seram Island in 2015.<sup>6</sup> In order to construe an explanation about Huaulu indigenous spatial arrangement, I combined the first-hand understandings I earned from that research with analysis of some Huaulu's myths. I collected required data by utilize some methods, especially observation, participant observation, and in-depth interview. I also consulted my findings with Valeri's accounts on Huaulu, especially in—but not limited to—"Parts and Wholes".

In discussing Huaulu spatial arrangement and cosmological order, this paper will be divided into six sections. First section is an introduction that outlines the background and problem of this paper. Afterwards, second section provides a brief description about Huaulu society and the significance of its village in studying their cosmology. Third section deals with analysis of Huaulu spatial arrangement in both house and village levels. This section will highlight the different patterns found on those levels and how they are relating to each other. At this point, my explanation will borrow Valeri's account. My departure from Valeri's original account will be started in fourth section, where I discuss some vectors embedded in Huaulu spatial arrangement. With this discussion, I hope to complement Huaulu spatial arrangement with some internal dynamics missing in Valeri's explanation. This will be followed by further explanation in fifth

section. This section aims to complete the reconstruction of Huaulu spatial arrangement by providing an explanation on the establishment of its vertical axis. A final remark about fundamental difference between conventional system of directions and Huaulu's will conclude this paper.

### Village AS Cosmos

As a political unity, Huaulu's original name is Sekenima. This community is known as Huaulu after its most dominant clan. Nowadays, Huaulu people live mostly in three locations: in Huaulu village itself which is their customary village and situated in the mountainous part of their territory, in Alakamat which began to develop as settlement during 1970s and situated in the coastal area, and in Transmigrant Settlement Unit of Huaulu (also known locally as Trans Area Kilo Lima) which is established by the Agency of Labor and Transmigration of Central Maluku Regency (Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi Kabupaten Maluku Tengah) in 2009/2010. Beside these three main settlements, Huaulu people usually also build their house in other locations near to their farm at the forest. They would live in there temporarily, usually during a certain period when they have to take care of their plants or to harvest their crops. Although their settlements spread on many sites across their claimed territory (*petuanan*), they would come to the customary village and stay in there for several days whenever a village agenda or a major ritual is about to be held. They would stay in there until the occasion is over. Therefore, Huaulu village in the mountain always serves as the center of orientation for Huaulu people. This customary village is the only village that according to Huaulu's understandings can be called properly as *niniani*.

Huaulu word "*niniani*" can be translated into Indonesian as "*desa*" or into English as "village". But, *niniani* actually has some connotations which are not contained either in *desa* or village. According to Huaulu conception, not all villages can be called *niniani*. As mentioned before, among villages where Huaulu people live, it is their customary village the only one that can be recognized as *niniani*. In addition, Huaulu people may live in several places, but there must not be more than one *niniani* at a time. Today, Huaulu *niniani* is situated in a site called Mutulam; before that, in Sekenima Oton, and several older *niniani*s located in several other places. The older the *niniani*, its location is usually closer to Liapoto—Huaulu's sacred mountain situated in Seram interior—than the newer ones. It is only in *niniani* that they could build their so-called customary house or big house (Huaulu: *luma poto*; Ambonese Malay: *baileo*) and taboo houses (Huaulu: *luma maquwoliem*; Ambonese Malay: *rumah pemali*) where they keep their

sacra. As a customary village, *niniani* is always built in accordance with certain layout and regulation. Therefore, if we look at *niniani*, we could clearly see how Huaulu organizes their space based on their ideal layout and manifest their cosmological model into a built environment.

In order to understand the significance of Huaulu customary village in studying their spatial arrangement and cosmological order, it is good for us to consider some of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's opinions about space perception. In his monograph, *Space and Place*,<sup>7</sup> Tuan has argued that human has no difference with other animals in regard to tendency to build. Human may build a house, a building, or even a palace, with highly architectural sophistications; yet, it is so for some kinds of birds, termites, bees, or some other animals—they also build structures which are complex and sophisticated. The only fundamental difference is human's awareness about what they build.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, even though modern society seems to have better capacity and ability to build complex structures, thanks to almost unlimited options of materials and advancement in building technology, Tuan argued that traditional society's awareness about their built environment is bigger than modern society's. He identified at least three factors that can explain why this is the case.<sup>9</sup>

The first factor is active participation. Traditional community does not recognize either professional architect or professional worker whose job and specialty is designing or building a house. Everyone has to build their own house as well as to help their neighbors build theirs. Secondly, this participation in building a house is very likely to be experienced several times by an individual during his/her lifetime. Traditional community tends to keep maintaining certain shape, layout, and structure that they see proper for a building and desirable. But, they usually use materials that can not last long enough, so that building and repairing become activities that they need to do incessantly. Undoubtedly, this repetition contributes in maintaining and sharpening someone's awareness about his/her community's building culture. Thirdly, it is not uncommon for traditional community to consider making a house or a building as serious task, even as an activity with religious significance so that it should be accompanied by ritual or sacrifice. These three factors seem to be relevant for Huaulu too.

Huaulu people build their house with materials they collect from the forest: iron woods with diameter of 10–14 cm for posts, big forest ferns' trunk for stanchions, bamboos and barks for flooring, sago stems for walls, sago leaves for roofs, rattans for ropes to bind joints, etc. None of those materials are processed with special preparation which aims to be means of preservation, such as painting or furnishing. If any, some preserving

procedures commonly used are simply drying up sago leaf-roofs (*wateam*) under the sun or storing rattan ropes in a rack above the stove (*para-para*) so that it could be fumigated while cooking food. During the process of house building, activities which seem to be elementary and dominant are only two: cutting and binding, with bush knife (*parang*) as the main tool.

Huaulu's traditional technique does not involve nails or spikes. Every joints of their house are tied up by rattan ropes or forest vines ropes. In early 2000s there was a "trend" in which many Huaulu houses were built in more "modern" way. Their shape had been modified so that the layout did not follow traditional rules, even though the basic separation between interior (with more defined rooms and kitchen) and exterior part (verandah) sustained. Their materials had been changed too; wooden boards became dominant, while zinc roof substituted sago leaf-roofs. Some people even hired professional workers (usually Javanese transmigrants) to build their house. This trend lasted for a quite short period. In 2010 Huaulu achieved an agreement among themselves to return to their building culture. The increasing number of foreign visitors over the years seems to be one—but not the only—consideration behind the initiative. Since then, every house that would be built in *niniani*, should be built according to traditional prescription, especially in choosing materials—bamboos and barks for flooring, sago stems for walls, sago leaves for roofs, etc.—and in making joints using rattan or vines ropes.

Considering Huaulu houses' materials, it is not surprising if their age is relatively short, usually just about 10–15 years. Bamboo floors and sago leaf-roofs are among parts that eventually rot while the rests are still in good condition, so that substituting these parts with the new ones without rebuilding the house entirely becomes frequent activity. However, rebuilding an entire house is not infrequent either. If a single house must be demolished and be rebuilt every two to three lustrums, then it is unlikely that Huaulu people would rebuild only one house during that period. This month they might rebuild house P, but in a few months they would rebuild house Q and then house R after that. If that so, there are many houses to be rebuilt in Huaulu within a decade; therefore, an individual will experience building a house several times during his/her lifetime. Of course, it is logical to characterize this rapid building activity as repetition if only the "blue print" of the house or the technique applied to build it is relatively unchanged over time. As Tuan pointed out, traditional communities are conservative in terms of building form and shape,<sup>10</sup> since it usually has religious significance or sacred value. Huaulu is relatively similar with them.



(Source: personal documentation, July 2015)

Figure 1. Luma potoamor the big house (above) and Huaulu traditional house (below).

Compared to Huaulu village in Sekenima Oton that Valeri visited in early 1970s, the village in Mutulam I visited more than forty years later has appearance which is more or less similar. Their layouts are alike, consists of two rows of houses that face each other, separated by a big yard that extends toward the mountain. Their houses have also similar shape and room division. According to Valeri, the older villages before Sekenima Oton have same characteristics too.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Huaulu house shape and village layout are relatively fixed and unchanged.

However, Huaulu seems to hold some conservatism not only in terms of building shape and village layout. The technique and technology they use to build are conservative too. We can clearly see their technical conservatism in the process of making *haharuram*, a huge beam which is used as a base for the wall that separates verandah and kitchen. They make *hararuram* from a single straight and big trunk. They make it by scraping the

trunk in its four sides in order to get a beam whose size is suitable for the house. In making *hararuram*, utilization of bush knife is mandatory, even though axe is also used as a help. They must not use other tools, including chainsaw which is already known to Huaulu people.



(Source: personal documentation, July 2015)

Figure 2. *Hararuram* and its making.

I hope what we have discussed so far can adequately illustrate the significance of *niniani* or Huaulu customary village. In fact, this built environment serves as miniature of Huaulu cosmos. That is why we need to study it and its spatial arrangement if we expect to understand their conception of space and cosmology in general.

### **Polar AND Circular Pattern OF Huaulu Village**

In this section, I will analyze Huaulu traditional house and examine its spatial arrangement. Afterwards, the analysis will proceed to village level.



Throughout Indonesian archipelago, we can easily find that duality serves as fundamental characteristic for traditional house architecture in many communities. Gender distinction between male and female often provides a base for this duality. For example, house of Tugutil people in Halmahera as studied by Martodirdjo.<sup>12</sup> Their house is divided into space for man and space for woman. But, other duality can take form of “inside–outside” duality, as we find in Javanese house (*joglo*). Spatial division of a *joglo* is organized according to distinction between what is physical or outer (*lahir*) and what is spiritual or inner (*batin*).<sup>13</sup>

In Huaulu, we can find such dual organization too, either gender-based duality or “inside–outside” duality. Valerius has provided a neat explanation about it and suggested that gender-based duality is a relatively universal phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> In Huaulu, these dualities are expressed through several traits of their village, including spatial division of their house. Huaulu house stands on stilts and has a shape of a square which is split equally into two halves. A verandah (*hahatiam*) forms the front or outer half, while a kitchen (*tukam*) forms the back or inner half. Verandah is recognized as space for man, whereas kitchen as space for woman. This identification is not a mere symbolic matter, since many activities typical to each gender are also associated with each of these spaces.<sup>15</sup> Woman cooks and serves daily meal in the kitchen, while man usually spends most of his time in home in verandah. Likewise, when they take a rest at night, man sleeps in verandah, while woman and children sleep in kitchen. For a clearer illustration, please take a look at the diagram below.

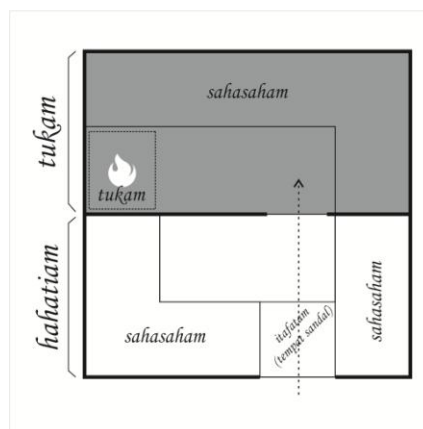


Figure 3. Floor diagram of Huaulu house.

As in house level, in village level dual organization operates according to gender distinction too. At a glance, Huaulu houses seem to be arranged in a polar manner—two opposing rows of houses face each other and being

separated by a spacious yard (Figure 4). However, once we make a more thorough inquiry, we will find that this spatial organization is actually not of polar opposition, for it forms a concentric pattern.<sup>16</sup> All of verandahs face the big yard. Altogether with the big yard itself, they form the “inside part” which serves as the center of Huauulu’s cosmos, and at the same time, as male space. Whereas kitchens of all houses, altogether with the forest at the outskirts, form the “outside part” which is comprehended as female space associated with chaos (Figure 5).

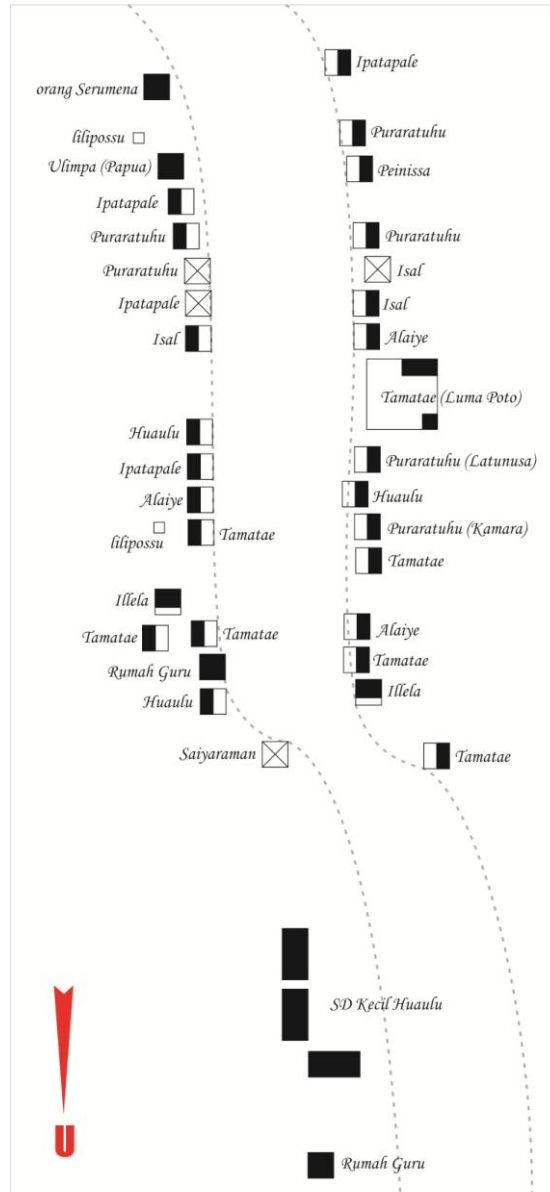


Figure 4. Spatial arrangement in Huauulu village at Mutulam.

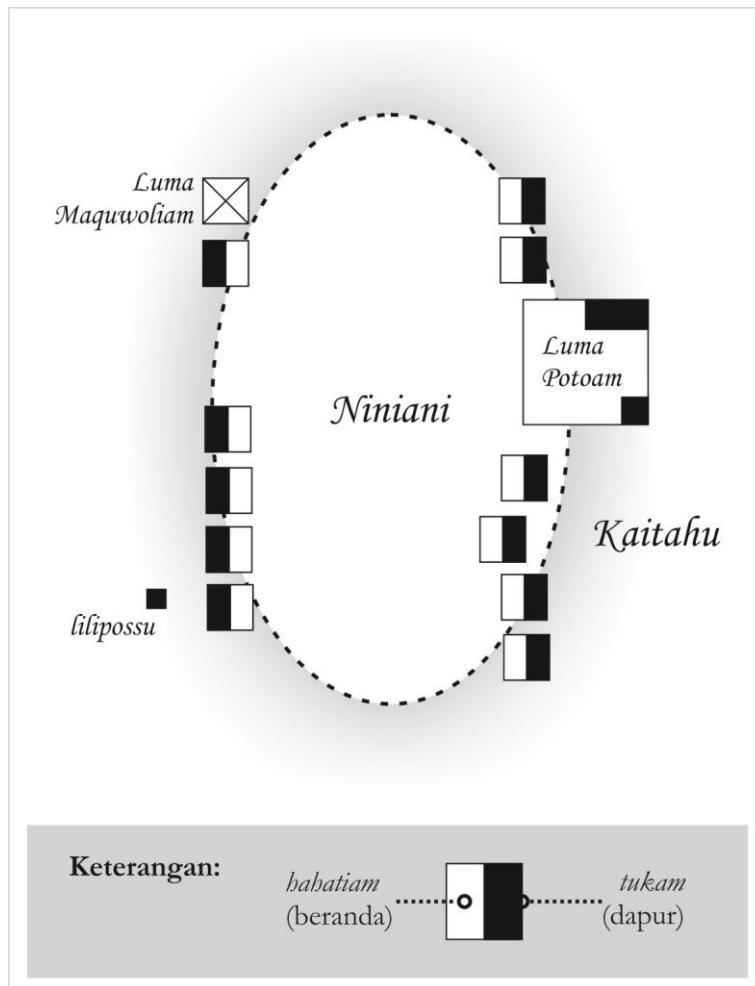


Figure 5. Concentric arrangement of Huaulu village.

“Outside-inside” division is also expressed by the use of prepositions “roe” and “ria” in Huaulu language. Both words are used to point certain direction. *Roe* can be translated into “East”, while *ria* into “West”. But, *roe* can also be used to point the direction of kitchen (*amroe tukam*: “to the kitchen”). Regardless the kitchen’s position, whether it is in the East of verandah or in the West, its direction would always be referred by *roe*. Likewise, this preposition is usually used to point the direction of the forest too (*amroe kaitahu*: “to the forest”), regardless its location, whether it is in the East of the village, in the North, in the West, or in the South of it. By examining village layout and the orientation of its houses, Valeri concluded that in this context, it is more reasonable to interpret *roe* not as “East”, but as “outside” or “exterior”.<sup>17</sup>

As the opposite of *roe*, *ria* is commonly used not only to point “West”, but also to point “inside”. For example, derivation “*riahali*” whose meanings include “inside” as in sentence “*riahali lumam*” (inside the house) and “heart” or “feeling”. However, during my fieldwork in Huaulu, I had never heard of *ria* used to point the direction of verandah or the big yard. I presume that Valeri had never heard of it either, for he associated the unity of verandahs and big yard with *ria* indirectly—if *roe* points to the direction of the kitchen and the forest, then it would be reasonable to assume that its opposite, *ria*, points to the direction of verandah and the big yard.

At this point, we find that the polar arrangement of Huaulu dwelling would change to the concentric one if we move our analysis from house level to village level.<sup>18</sup> However, this changing is not the only consequence caused by the shifting of our level of analysis. So far, we have seen that there are at least two types of distinction which are relevant to understand Huaulu spatial arrangement, and are not rare to be superimposed one another, namely gender-based distinction of “male and female” and “inside–outside” distinction. As far as I have observed, Valeri never discussed both distinctions separately. However, here I suggest that we need to clearly distinct the two, since identification of “inside” and “outside” with “male” and “female” is exchangeable following its context. At house level, inside is female space, as kitchen indicates; whereas outside is male space, as verandah indicates. But in village level, kitchens (altogether with forest) are outside, yet at the same time still being associated with female, while verandahs (altogether with the big yard) are inside and still being associated with male. This interchangeable association is what I meant by the other consequence.

Now we can move from house level and village level to a more extended context, namely the level of the unity of village and its surrounding forest. Huaulu village is surrounded by a dense low land forest. As settlement for a small community in the midst of vast wilderness, this village is like a sanctuary where its inhabitants can live and dwell safely. In this respect, it has similar characteristic with the village of Ndembu in Central Africa as described by Turner in his classic ethnography.<sup>19</sup> In Ndembu, Turner found duality between village and forest. Village is a place for human, for order, for what is cultural; whereas forest becomes place for the beasts and evil spirits, place for disorder. In other words, in Ndembu as well as in Huaulu, village is identical with cosmos, while forest is identical with chaos—just as Valeri suggested that village is the representation of the cosmos itself.<sup>20</sup> We can make this duality between village and forest clearer

by considering Huaulu's movement through space and time during their habitation in North Seram.

Huaulu is basically a moving society who would build a new village in a new site after dwelling certain location for three to five decades. Because of this constant moving, from time to time they have been witnessing how nature reclaims sites that they have dwelled once. They have witnessed villages from the past return into woods and shrubs. It is not uncommon for Huaulu, then, to use ancient village's name or, more often, its big house's to signify certain spot in the woods where it stood a long time ago. Furthermore, those places then serve as ancient stages where episodes from ancestral epoch as depicted in the myths took place. From this naming process, forest turns into a sort of storage where Huaulu's collective memory about their old villages—hence, their history—are saved or recorded. Salatihatam and Skenima Oton are just few examples among their old villages which are already reunited with forest and mountain.

In Huaulu, people opening the forest, clearing the land, conquering the wilderness, building the village as their sanctuary; but then, in time that village will be swallowed by roots and leaves and return into woods. It is like an everlasting game of mutual reclaim between human and nature. Thus, dialectic between these two forces marks relationship between village and forest. At this point, we may conclude that in Huaulu, village-forest duality is a duality between cosmos and chaos, order and disorder, or between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead.

### **Embedded Vector in Huaulu Spatial Arrangement**

Valeri's interpretation about "outside" and "inside" connotations conceived in prepositions *roe* and *ria* undoubtedly helps us in revealing concentric layout which underlies Huaulu's spatial arrangement in village level. Data which I have collected during my fieldwork confirm this interpretation. However, based on my data, I suggest to inferring some further connotations from both prepositions. We can start with "back" and "front" connotation.

In regard to Huaulu house, *roe* which is identical with direction of kitchen can also be identified as "backwards" or "to back" (*kalu*). The reason for this is simple: kitchen is always situated in the back part of a house, while verandah occupies its front part. If we put this orientation in bigger context, i.e. in village level, then the forest would be located in "back", while the village itself in its opposite, i.e. in "front".

To interpret *ria* and *roe* in relation with village and forest as front and back is to add some sort of vector to this scheme. "Back" points to origin,

i.e. to position or location that we left behind when we move. On the contrary, “front” points to location or position that we aim, i.e. destination. This identification and interpretation is not without a ground in Huaulu’s daily life or conversations held in their language. There is another word in Huaulu language which points the same direction as *roe* (i.e. East); the word is “*pale*”. Even though *pale* has another meaning that is “below”, in some context, both *pale* and *roe* can be used to point “backwards” or “point of departure” as I have explained. Let me give one simple example from my experience during my fieldwork.

When I showed me the direction of North Seram District capital, Waihai, from Huaulu, one of my informant pointed a direction while saying that Waihai situated on the North (*lau*) of Huaulu (if we check the map, it actually is North East). One day we went together to Waihai for running some errand. On the way back home, a Huaulu friend asked us, “*Pai?*” (“Where [did you from]?”), and then my informant said, “*Oipale Waihai*” (“From Waihai”). In a context like this, it is more sensible to interpret *oipale* or *pale* not as “from (East)”, but as “from (somewhere we left)”, since my informant obviously knew that Waihai was actually located on the North (*lau*) of Huaulu. In addition, when it brings its meaning as “below”, *pale*’s antonym is “*hoto*” whose meaning is “above” as in the sentence “*hoto aituhu*” which means “above the tree”. Interestingly, *hoto* also means “to” as in the sentence “*a taki hoto ninianiam*” which means “I go to the village”. This language game seems to strengthen *pale*’s connotation which is linked to “back” or “point of departure”.

For further demonstration, I suggest we go back for a while to the meaning of *roe* and *ria* as East and West, but this time in more specific definition: the direction from which the sun rises and the direction to which the sun sets.<sup>21</sup> We can take Balinese spatial arrangement as comparison. In Bali, the direction of the rising sun (East) is identical with “birth”, while the opposite (West) is identical with “death”; therefore, Balinese considers East as auspicious direction and West as inauspicious.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, for Huaulu, dusk or the time when the sun is setting is considered inauspicious time. They believe that at the time evil spirits infiltrate their village. It is at that time too when “evil persons” or head hunters (*timatem*) usually aim their victim.<sup>23</sup> However, both *roe* and *ria* still have some other connotations related to the movement of the sun or the East and the West that we need to consider.

In some context, Huaulu people do not perceive the West which is associated with sunset as bad or inauspicious. For example, when they are about to fall a tree to make the main post (*hili atokuam*) of the big house,

they would give the task to the future guardian of the new big house. It is mandatory for him to chop the tree in certain ways so that it would fall westward. It is forbidden to fall it to direction other than West. In this occasion, the West becomes auspicious direction.

In other context, the East can be associated with the death. If we return East to its Huaulu word, *roe*, then we would find that it has close association with the forest, while the forest itself is being perceived as the place for the dead, evil spirits, beasts, and other dangerous creatures. Meanwhile, it is forbidden to bring the body of the deceased across the big yard. That is why, if someone dies in a house located at the right side of the big yard, then he/she should be buried in the forest at the right side. If he/she dies in a house at the left side, then they should bury him/her in the forest at the left side. The location where the deceased is about to be buried might be situated in the West or East of the village. Either way, it will always be in the forest, i.e. in the *roe* direction, and the body is forbidden to enter the inner part of village (*riahali ninianiam*). In other words, in this context *roe* is identical with death, while *ria* with life.

At this point, in order to understand better about the conceptual affinity between *roe* and *ria* with the sun, I suggest to go back to their most “natural” association. In this context, we need to focus at the sun (*leam*) and its movement. It is common for Huaulu people to signify different times in a day with reference of several positions of the sun in the sky. To signify morning time when the sun is rising they say “*lea saa*” (the sun ups), for noon they say “*lea totu*” (the sun is in the zenith), for afternoon “*lea lama*”, and for the dawn when the sun is setting “*lea sofu*”. They usually express all of these time signatures while pointing finger to the sun’s position at a time.<sup>24</sup> This time measuring seems to show us that Huaulu people are aware about the movement of the sun from East to West. By considering sun’s movement as reference, we are able to understand how the East (*roe*) is identical with “back” direction or the point which is left behind, whereas the West (*ria*) is identical with “front” direction or the point which is aimed. Within this meaning configuration we can clearly see—through the existence of a vector which flows from “back” to “front”—the continuity in the transformation of *roe-ria* scheme from diametrical spatial opposition (East–West) to concentric spatial opposition (outside–inside). As we have discussed, it is precisely this change that we would find when our analysis moves from house level to village level.

After instilling a vector to Huaulu spatial arrangement, now we find a scheme which is not only concentric but also centripetal (Figure 6). This scheme confirms that the village (*niniani*), as a cosmos, is not only positioned

as a middle or center, but also as a focus of orientation for Huaulu people. It is obvious whenever major ceremony or ritual, such as king inauguration and traditional dance *Kahua*, is being held. At the time, every Huaulu people, wherever they live, have to return to the village to participate in the occasion.

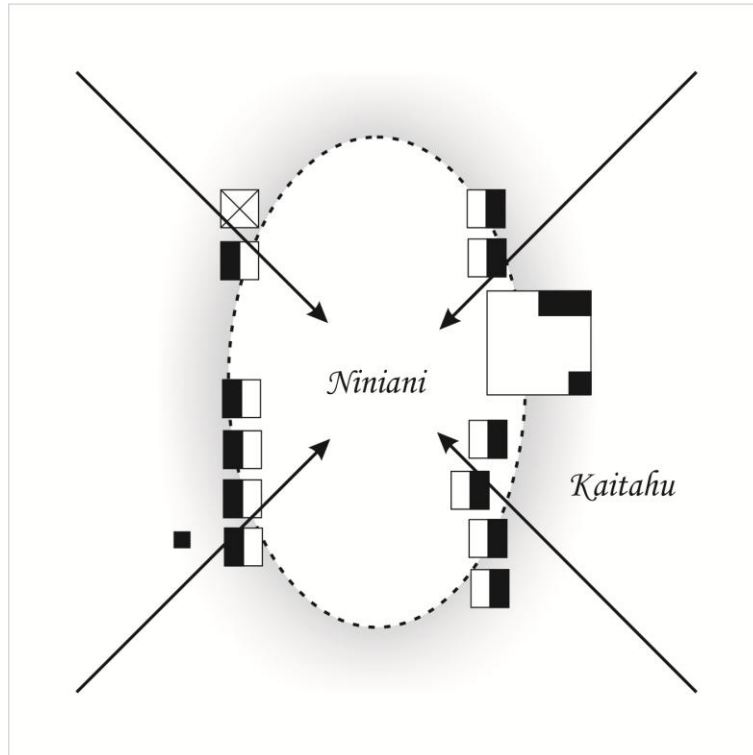


Figure 6. Centripetal arrangement of Huaulu village.

We can compare what we found in Huaulu with Fernandez's findings in Zulu and Fang in Africa.<sup>25</sup>In his article, "Emergence and Convergence in Some African Sacred Places," Fernandez gave his interpretation about spatial arrangement of their villages. Fang village shapes a rectangular layout which is nuanced by opposition. This village is divided into two groups of houses that face each other: *ndebot* and *mvogabot*. Both groups have tendency to be in a conflict or quarrel. Even so, when foreign threat presents, they would be able to unite and build solidarity. Huaulu village is quite similar with Fang's in respect of its layout which is like a rectangle with two opposite sides. Huaulu houses are arranged in two opposite rows too. But, different with Fang village, this opposite arrangement does not involve any hostility or sentiment of identity between two rows. In fact, as we have



discussed, there is underlying concentric scheme beneath this polar arrangement. In this respect, Huaulu village is more similar to Zulu's rather than Fang's.

Zulu village has circular layout and orients to a cattle shed (*isibaya*) in its center. This circular settlement is centripetal in its nature—being oriented to a single spot. In contrary, Fang village is centrifugal—being oriented outwardly, as if distancing itself from a single spot. Fernandez explained this phenomenon by identifying the architectonic of their environment. According to Fernandez, the development of centrifugal scheme in Fang village is driven by “claustrophobia”. This claustrophobia, triggered by dense forest that surrounds them, makes Fang people tend to go out and free themselves from that imprisoning place. Although both Huaulu and Fang has village with rectangular layout and surrounded by dense forest, Huaulu seems to develop a contrary tendency.

Instead of “claustrophobic” and tend to go out, Huaulu establishes some “enclave” in the middle of wilderness and then gather in there. This psychology is obviously closer to Zulu's than to Fang's. But Zulu does not live in a dense forest. They live in a vast savannah. It is tremendous for them to live in a vast open space so that they feel small, vulnerable, and insecure. Thereby, they are urged to gather and form unity.<sup>26</sup> We can fairly say that Fernandez's argument to explain those communities relies on psychology of fear—Fang tends to build centrifugal settlement because of their fear of narrow space, while Zulu tends to build centripetal settlement because of their fear in facing a vast space without apparent limit. This psychology is apparently relevant to Huaulu too. As for Huaulu, forest is dangerous place where someone may die so sudden, either died by venomous snake bite, wild boar strike, falling from tree, drowning in flooding river, or by any other cause. Considering the situation which requires them to always deal with dangerous environment, it is reasonable to characterize their village as some kind of sanctuary.

### **Huaulu's Vertical Axis**

Put it simple, the process of building Huaulu house consists of some consecutive stages. After determining the location, the next stages are (1) collecting logs for posts and frames as well as rattan for ropes, (2) hunting, (3) fixing posts and setting floor, (4) hunting again, (5) installing roofs, and finally, (6) eating together. The entire process may spend two to three weeks to accomplish. Reflecting this building process, I argue that the “posture” of Huaulu house represents a vertical axis in their cosmological order. This is Heaven–Earth axis which connects human world with two divine entities

who, according to Huaulu's traditional believe (*Memaha*), regulate the universe—*Lahatala* the Father Sky and *Puhum* the Mother Earth. This axis will complement concentric scheme which we have discussed. In this section, I will try to demonstrate this thesis and make my point clear.

During the process of building a house, Huaulu people would go for hunting twice: before they fix the posts (*hiliam*) to the ground and before they install the roofs (*wateam*). In this context, hunting marks the most important stages in building process. In fact, Huaulu people would accomplish those two stages—posts fixation and roofs installation—in most solemnity and more seriously than all other stages, so as the process seems to some extent religious and sacred. It is evident from the fact that during both stages people are required to obey some taboos (*pemali*).

During the process of fixing posts (a Huaulu house usually has 25 posts) no one on the occasion is allowed to sneeze. If one sneezes, then the process must be stopped temporarily. Usually, it would be postponed for a day. In this case, sneeze is considered as one of posts fixing-related taboos. Some readers might wonder, is there any *rationale* for this taboo? Or, why is it forbidden to sneeze? Let me try to explain it.

In some occasions, sneeze is forbidden or at least related to certain taboos. When someone is going to hunt, for example, he should postpone his trip for a while if he suddenly sneezes before he manages to leave the village. It is so even if the one who sneezes is his neighbor. If, while he is passing, someone sneezes and he hears the sneeze, then he should come around to his/her house, makes a chit-chat or eating areca nuts in there until the sneeze is being “forgotten”, before he return to his trip. Otherwise, his trip could be unsafe. Such incident is considered as *sokale* or “bad omen”.<sup>27</sup>

There is another *sokale* which is considered as more fatal. The postponement caused by it is longer than time spent for a chit-chat or eating areca nuts. It happens when someone is tripped on the floor or something else inside his house before he leaves for hunting or traveling. In this case, he must postpone his departure for at least one day. In both kinds of *sokale*, we can see a similarity. While sneezing or being tripped, someone loses his/her cautiousness for a moment, so he/she has to take a time to regain it. This implies that people have to be fully aware of what they do when they are hunting or traveling. So do when they are fixing posts for a new house. This task should be taken in full awareness, for its importance is beyond a mere technical thing. During the house building process, fixing posts has significance with religious value. By stabbing logs into the ground, the new house is meant to be connected with the earth. In other words, this

stage signifies the connectedness of the house with *Ina Puhum* or Mother Earth.

Furthermore, in regard to Huaulu traditional believe, *Puhum* is always in relation with *Amai Lahatala* or Father Sky. The need to be connected with *Lahatala*, during the building process, is expressed in roofs installation. There are more taboos in this stage than in posts fixation. The process of installing roofs must be initiated by eating areca nuts. According to my informant, eating areca nuts is a habit of all “mountain people”, not only Huaulu. Other communities in Seram interior such as Roho, Kanike, Serumena, Maraina, and Manusela do so.<sup>28</sup> They have this habit either in their daily routine or in special occasion like installing roofs for a new house. We need to notice that in special occasions or rituals, they use same ingredients as in their daily activities: areca nuts, chalk, and occasionally, betel leaves. However, the “value” of areca nuts used to initiate roofs installation is completely different with usual areca nuts’. When explained it to me, *Latunusa* (the Lord of the Land) emphasized the specialness of areca nuts that were count as a part of the occasion:

“[Before we start the installation] we all eat areca nuts first, but not that one,” said he, while pointing at areca nuts in a container, then point to another one which was prepared specially for the occasion, “this one.”<sup>29</sup>

Even though both are physically same, the areca nuts for initiating roofs installation are purposely prepared in particular for that occasion. In other words, that thing which is not different with any other areca nuts is transcended by loading it with particular symbolic values. Within its context, it is not random thing anymore.



(Source: personal documentation, 11 July 2015)

Figure 7. Eating areca nuts before starting roof installation.

Shortly after eating areca nuts, some people then stand in a row at the front side and back side of the house. Each of them holds a sheet of roof (*wateam*) which is set on the end of *asaem* (roof framings made from bamboos). At the subsequent moment, the atmosphere would turn into solemn. While holding their roof sheet, people listen to the spiritual leader (*Bapak Adat*) who loudly recites a prayer in Huaulu language. He stands in the back side of the house, the part that eventually would become kitchen; also holds a roof sheet. Soon after he finished his prayer, he would tie the first roof sheet and followed by the others. Therefore, roofs installation starts from the back side of the house, initiated by spiritual leader. It proceeds by simultaneously installing roofs at the front and back side from the lowest to the highest row until the process complete.



(Source: personal documentation, 11 July 2015)

Figure 8. Installation of the first row of the roof. We can see the spiritual leader (second one from the right) starts the installation after recited a prayer.

During installation of the first row of the roof, noone is allowed to sneeze. In addition, roofsinstallation has another rule that is similar to *sokale* too. If, during the process someone falls from the roof, let alone fall to death, then the entire process of house building, not only the roofs installation, must be stopped. This time, unlike in case of sneezing, any postponement is not enough. Even if the last roof sheet is about to be installed, after someone has fallen, the new house has to be demolished to its very foundation.

There are two other taboos during roofs installation. Firstly, there are a couple of roof framings (*asaem*) which must be clear from binding. As I have explained, roof sheets are installed on roof frames by tying it up with ropes made from bamboo skin. But a couple of framings, each placed in front part and back part of the house, should not be tied up. Secondly,

there is a row of roof sheets which must be installed reversely.<sup>30</sup> When the roofs installation is half-way done, the process has to be halted for a while. At the moment, the wife of the house owner would be asked to come to the construction site. There she is required to pass some roof sheets to those who steadily stay at the roof frames to install them. It is these roof sheets that have to be installed reversely. After it done, she would head back to the kitchen and the rest of the roofs would be installed until this stage is completely finished.

Discussion in this section brings us to a model of creation of vertical axis in Huauilu cosmological order. In this universe, human who is dwelling a house, i.e. in between posts stabbed to the ground and roofs upheld to the sky, has role to mediate earth and heaven by living in between them. In other words, borrowing Geertz's terminology,<sup>31</sup> we can say that for Huauilu, as for many other communities, a house is a *model* of their cosmological order. On the other hand, the house building process itself is actually a learning field for local knowledge inheritance and competency training. Building a house involves not only a lot of people, but people from different generations. Many people, either men in construction site or women in the kitchen, have participated, from the elders, adults, youths in their early 20s, to teenagers. In this occasion, the elders teach younger "apprentices" not only some technical stuffs on how to build a house or to do part per part of it properly, but also every taboo that must be obeyed during the process. In other words, it is during this process that some competencies required to be Huauilu people are learned and trained. Therefore, we can fairly say that this process is also a *model* for the most proper way of life for Huauilu.

## Conclusion

After analyzed the process of building a house in Huauilu, now we can draw two imaginary axes (or axis and plane) that underlie their spatial arrangement and cosmological order: (1) vertical axis orients toward Earth and Heaven, and (2) horizontal axis orients toward kitchen and verandah (in house level) or horizontal plane of village and its surrounding forest (in village level). Earth, kitchen, and forest are associated with disorder and feminine principle. In contrary, sky, verandah, and village are associated with order and masculine principle.

In house level, both imaginary axes (vertical and horizontal one) are arranged as perpendicular to each other to form four directions: up, down, front, and back. But, if we move from house level to village level, these directions would be transformed into up, down, inside, and outside. Once

this transformation took place, the horizontal axis with polar dualism (verandah *vis-à-vis* kitchen) would be replaced by horizontal plane with concentric dualism (“inside world” of the village *vis-à-vis* “outside world” of the forest). The next trait of Huaulu spatial arrangement that must be considered is the existence of vector embedded in its scheme. In village level, the horizontal plane has centripetal vector which flows from forest to village, while the vertical axis embedded by upward vector which flows from earth to sky. The identification of this vector helps us to logically make a link between *roe*’s connotation as East with its connotation as outside, as well as a link between *ria*’s connotation as West with its connotation as inside—therefore, it helps us to answer the research question of this paper. By considering all of these characteristics, Huaulu spatial arrangement can be illustrated in subsequent diagram:

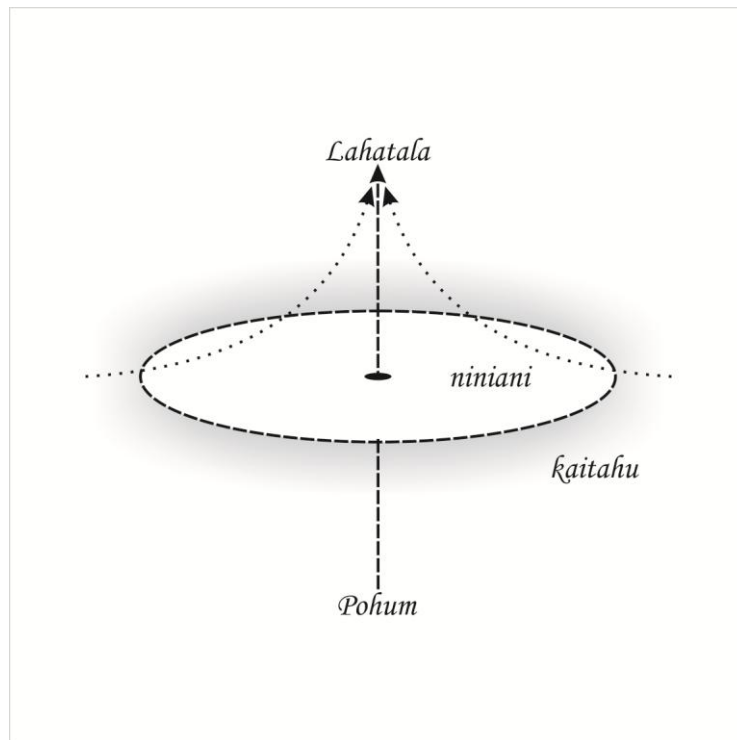


figure 9. vertical axis, horizontal plane, and vector in village level.

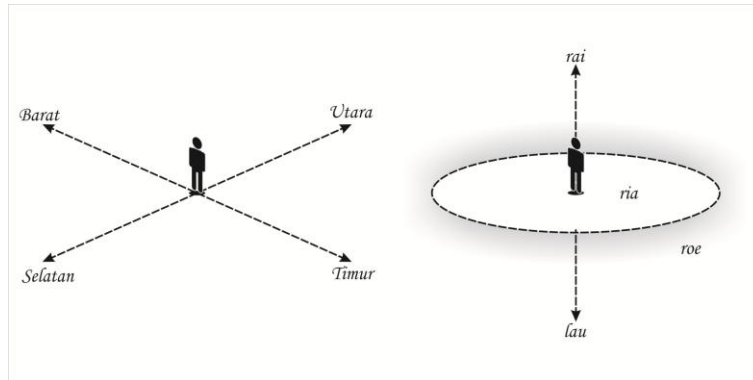


figure 10. comparison between conventional system of directions and huaulu system.

So far, my argument and demonstration suggest that the identifications of *lau* as North, *roe* as East, *rai* as South, and *ria* as West are resulted from incomplete process of translation. North, East, South, and West are directions that work on two perpendicular axes which are arranged on a plane, whereas *lau-rai* and *roe-ria* are originally based on completely different geometry which consists of a concentric horizontal plane and a vertical axis at its center (Figure 10). Finally, I argue that it is a failure to properly recognize this geometrical difference and Huaulu system's embedded vector which contributes to Valeri's unsuccessfulness in completing his interpretation on Huaulu spatial arrangement.

## Endnotes:

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<sup>2</sup> Valerio Valeri, *The Forest of Taboos: Morality, Hunting, and Identity Among the Huaulu of the Moluccas* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Valerio Valeri, "Parts and Wholes: Social and Conceptual Dualis min the Central Moluccas", in V. Valeri, *Fragments from Forests and Libraries* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001a).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> I conducted fieldwork for three months during the midyear of 2015 with key informants consist of Kamara or Raja Huaulu (the King of Huaulu), Latunusa or Raja Tanah (the Lord of the Land), Bapak Adat (local spiritual leader), and the elders of Huaulu that have knowledge about Huaulu's myths as well as authority to narrate it. This research was part of a broader research about trans-cultural principles in Maluku conducted by a

team from the Department of Anthropology, University of Indonesia, led by Dr. Tony Rudyansjah. The team consists of six members whose tasks are doing ethnography in five locations: Sawai, Masihulan, Huauulu, Parigi, and Wahai. I would like to thank Dr. Tony Rudyansjah and my fellow team members: Ikhtiar Hatta, Geger Riyanto, R. I. Sihombing, Diny Starina, and M. Nuzul, for several discussions during this research, as well as my informants for providing me with a lot of insightful data.

<sup>7</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> Valerio Valeri, "Parts and Wholes", p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> Haryo S. Martodirdjo, "Organisasi Sosial Orang Tugutil di Halmahera", in *Halmahera and Beyond: Social Science Research in the Moluccas*, edited by L. E. Visser (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Gunawan Tjahjono, "Cosmos, Center, and Duality in Javanese Architectural Tradition: The Symbolic Dimensions of House Shapes in Kota Gede and Surroundings" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Valerio Valeri, "Parts and Wholes", pp. 94–103.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 95–96.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969).

<sup>20</sup> Valerio Valeri, "Parts and Wholes", p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Valerio Valeri, "Temporal Forms of Society: Chronological and Subjective Time, Mythical and Historical Time among the Huauulu (Eastern Indonesia)", in V. Valeri, *Fragments from Forests and Libraries* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001b), p. 321.

<sup>22</sup> See Mark Hobart, "A Balinese Village and Its Field of Social Relations" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1979), p. 59; Joseph L. Aranha, "A Comparison of Traditional Settlements in Nepal and Bali", *TDSR*, Vol. II (1991), p. 38; Leo Howe, *The Changing World of Bali* (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Valeri, *The Forest of Taboos*, pp. 232–233.

<sup>24</sup> Valeri, "Temporal Forms of Society", p. 317.

<sup>25</sup> James Fernandez, "Emergence and Convergence in Some African Sacred Places", in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, edited by Setha M. Low et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Kamara, 14 Juli 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Latunusa and Elias Illela, 11 Juli 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Latunusa, 11 Juli 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Kamara, 14 Juli 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 93.



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